

al-Qaida – Chapter 1 – Boom

Charles 'Chuck' Tunis was 39 years old and unemployed. He had graduated from High School in 1981 and after dropping out of college, had enlisted in the US Air Force. Originally he had planned to serve his time and save up money to return to school. He figured his savings plus what educational benefits he might accrue while in the service would permit him to return to college with enough money to do it right the second time.

Born dirt poor, his parents hadn't been able to help him at all with the expenses of going to college. The \$500 scholarship barely covered one semester's tuition at the Junior College. He had taken one and then a second job to cover his books and living expenses. His studies had suffered so greatly that he'd been forced to drop out. Consequently, he saved every penny he could while he was in the service. While others had cars, he rode the shuttle bus. He had a couple of pairs of jeans and a dress suit for civilian clothes. But, he didn't go anywhere except the base library to read and to an occasional movie, so he didn't really need any civies.

By the end of his first hitch, he had saved over \$5,000. It would have been more, but every once in a while, he would hear about or see an ad for a used gun. If he couldn't talk the individual down to a really cheap price, he passed on a gun. Sometimes the individual would really be hard up for cash and he'd get a super bargain. At the end of his first hitch, he had a Colt .45 Auto that he'd picked up from the DCM, a Winchester 9422 .22 lever action rifle and a Winchester 94 .30-30.

And, by the end of his first hitch, he was enticed to reenlist by the size of the reenlistment bonus being offered. That bonus really padded his nest egg. Halfway through that second hitch, he was promoted to Staff Sergeant and he saved even more money or would have if he hadn't gotten some really good deals on guns. The reenlistment bonus was better the next time and he decided to make a career out of the Air Force.

By the time he was approaching having 20 years in, he was tired of the service. So, he got out, figuring he could find a job easily enough. Unfortunately his Air Force Specialty Code hadn't prepared him for a civilian job and he was jobless.

He had finally caved in the last year and bought an old Navy surplus Jeep that had seen better days. Oh well, he thought, what could he expect for \$250. At least it ran. He wasn't much of a mechanic, but got a lot of help at the auto shop on base and had rebuilt or replaced every worn out part. The Jeep, built during the 1950's, maybe earlier, was older than he was by a wide margin.

He'd picked up a closed 4'x6' trailer from another hard up GI during his last year of service and had packed his meager possessions and extensive gun collection in the trailer and headed to LA to find a job. After a frustrating month of looking, he decided that he might fare better in Phoenix and drove the 400+ plus miles to look for work there. He finally took a job as a Security Guard, just to make ends meet. One day while in a gun store, he struck up a conversation with the owner and ended up working in the gun

store.

He soon realized that his gun collection, bought for pennies on the dollar was worth a fortune. Over the next 6 years, he had leveraged his collection into a fine armory. Having purchased a partial ownership in the store, he had acquired his Class III Dealers license. Able to buy new firearms for ~70% of retail, he reinvested his salary and profit shares into more firearms and a small piece of land east of Phoenix. He taught himself to lay concrete block and the fundamentals of carpentry. Using those skills, he built a home on the property.

Putting in the well had been expensive, but he had water. Electricity was more problematic and he had put in several PV panels and a battery bank. He also had a 15kw portable diesel generator. By the time he had his home done, he had been working at the gun store for 6 years and was 45 years old. A third party offered to buy the store and since his ownership interest was only 25%, he was forced out.

The store sold for a very good price, however, and his 25% interest left him fairly comfortable, financially. He was too young to retire, but with his military pension, and the proceeds from the sale, he decided to devote his time to his small ranch; that is if you could call 40 acres of sand and chaparral a ranch.

About the time he had gotten out of the service, the price of gold had fallen to \$297 an ounce. He liquidated his investments and turned all but a small portion of his cash into gold. It wouldn't have to go up much in value for him to make a killing. He resisted all temptation to liquidate the Eagles when the price of gold began to rise. Even if the dollar became worthless, he figured, his investment in gold could only appreciate.

Chuck sat in his living room listening to the radio and savoring a cold beer. He had seen TV and didn't care much for the programming so he didn't waste his money on a set. The EAS tone sounded on the radio getting his attention. He sat up and listened to the announcement.

ABC news is receiving reports of massive explosions around the country. AP reports that at approximately 8:28 EDT, a nuclear device was detonated on southern Manhattan Island. Similar explosions have been reported in Los Angeles, Chicago, Huston, Philadelphia, San Diego, Dallas, San Antonio, Detroit and San Jose. Apparently devices placed in Phoenix and Washington, DC detonated but failed to trigger nuclear explosions. Stay tuned to this station for continuing coverage.

"Oh crap," he thought, "At least Phoenix didn't go nuclear. Lucky me."

He looked at his watch and realized that the explosions had occurred almost 30 minutes earlier. Ticking off the cities in his head, he realized that whoever was responsible had targeted the cities with the largest populations. He grabbed another beer from the refrigerator and sat down at the kitchen table to review his list of supplies.

During the six years Chuck had worked in the gun store, he'd seen about every kind of nut there was. A popular store with the survivalist crowd, some of their suggestions had made sense to him. He had, during his years of service collected several rolls of the pre-'65 halves, quarters and dimes. Not a lot, but the rolls were safely tucked away in his fire safe with his Eagles. He had built a storm shelter/fruit cellar and it was well stocked with several cases of food. He bought what he ate and he ate what he bought. He wasn't an adventurous eater and the food was pretty plain. He watched the sales and bought by the case, if possible.

Chuck ticked off the list: food, ammo, tools, web gear, his armory, gold and silver coins, camping gear, tissue, and other items. He was in good shape there. They had filled his 500-gallon diesel tank last week, so he had plenty of fuel for his Dodge pickup (6BT Cummins engine). His water tank was full at the moment, too. He had rigged the well pump circuit with a photoelectric switch and the pump only ran if there was enough daylight to generate electricity.

"Guess I'd better pay attention to the news," he thought.

The President has declared martial law effective at 9:00pm EDT, the announced said. A dusk to dawn curfew will commence at that time. National Guard units from areas not affected by the explosions are being mobilized to help the survivors. The President will address the nation at 10pm EDT.

Chuck decided that he'd better do something to protect his livestock from any wind-borne fallout that might make it all the way from San Diego or Los Angeles. The barn was half below ground and half above ground. It was constructed from adobe brick and the roof was overlain with two feet of sand, providing cool shade for his two feeder cattle and four horses. He led the horses to their stalls, and then herded the two steers into the barn. He bought one steer every year and butchered one every year. He gave half of the meat to his part-time ranch hand, Jose and Jose's wife Maria.

He decided that he'd better go check on Jose and Maria. He fired up his pickup and headed north to their trailer. When he arrived, Jose met him before he could get out of his truck.

"Chuck," Jose said, "Have you heard about the bombs?"

"Sure have amigo," Chuck answered, "Is everyone ok here?"

"So far, yes," Jose replied, "We were watching the news when they interrupted with the announcement. Maria is scared to death and is hugging Teresa so hard I'm afraid she might hurt her."

"It will be ok Jose," Chuck responded, "Let me stick my head in and say hi to her. Maybe I can calm her a little."

Maria sat transfixed in front of the TV. She was clutching their 5-month-old baby girl to her chest and rocking back and forth. Tears fell silently from her eyes.

“Maria how’s my baby girl?” Chuck said referring to Teresa.

“Ok...I guess.” Maria replied meekly.

“Jose, this trailer won’t offer much protection if any radiation makes it here from Los Angeles,” Chuck warned. “Why don’t the three of you come over to my house?”

“Gee, I don’t know,” Jose replied, “Maria, what do you think?”

“I’d feel better if we went Jose, if Chuck’s right, we’re going to be in trouble,” she advised.

“What do you want us to bring amigo?” Jose asked.

“Let’s load up whatever food you have, some clothes and any medicine you might need,” Chuck responded.

Jose also loaded the old Winchester model 92 that had belonged to his grandfather. One of the last model 92s manufactured, it was a .44-40 and was in excellent condition considering its age. His father’s Colt Frontier Six-Shooter, also a .44-40, went in the truck with the rifle. Jose, Maria and Teresa got in Jose’s old junker Ford and they followed Chuck back to his home. When they arrived, Maria took Teresa into the house and Chuck and Jose unloaded the pickup.

“Couldn’t help but notice that you don’t have much baby food or Enfamil,” Chuck said.

“We usually only have what we need for a couple of weeks on hand Chuck,” Jose responded, “You pay me more per hour working for you part-time than I make working for the garage. But money is always tight.”

“I thought so,” Chuck grinned, “When you put that last load in your room, join me in the fruit cellar.”

The fruit cellar was almost half the size of Chuck’s house. There were two full sized beds, a combination electric stove/sink/refrigerator and several rows of shelving. He would have preferred a gas stove, but that meant having a propane tank installed and he had never bothered. Every time a case of something got down below $\frac{1}{3}$ case, he watched for a sale and replaced the case. Slowly, his food supply had grown. Around the time Teresa had been born, he had gotten a really good deal on some baby food and Enfamil. Usually, he gave Jose six jars of baby food and a can of Enfamil when Jose came by to help with the fence. He always told Jose that he’d picked up a few jars for Teresa. Jose always accepted the food gratefully and suspected that Chuck was buying the food intentionally to help Maria and him out.

“You down here?” Jose asked.

Come on down amigo,” Chuck replied.

When Jose walked up to Chuck, Chuck handed him a can of Enfamil and picked up a half dozen assorted jars of baby food.

“Let’s get back to the house,” Chuck said.

“Why do you have all of that baby food?” Jose asked.

“Got it on sale and I put some up so I could help you and Maria out,” Chuck laughed, “Sort of a bonus for all of your hard work. Guess it just sort of worked out well, wouldn’t you say?”

Jose didn’t know how to answer his friend. He stared at the food that Chuck had accumulated, realizing that there was much that he didn’t know about the man. He had met Chuck at the gun shop in Phoenix when he had gone in to buy some ammo for his rifle and revolver. They had gotten to talking and he learned that they were neighbors living only about a mile apart. Chuck had said he needed help putting in a fence around his 40 acres and asked Jose if he knew anyone who could help him on weekends. Jose and Maria had just gotten married and he needed the money, so he volunteered.

“Maria look at what Chuck had in his fruit cellar,” Jose said setting the Enfamil on the table. “And he had some baby food, too.”

Chuck set the jars of baby food on the kitchen counter and turned on the radio.

“We missed the President’s speech,” he said, “But they will repeat it 100 times, so let’s find out what Billy boy had to say.”

President Clinton went on to say that although the nuclear weapons were clearly of Soviet manufacture, until the administration could determine who had delivered the weapons, he would not retaliate. The Russian Federation has denied responsibility for any part of the attack on the US and President Yeltsin warned President Clinton about assuming that the Russian Federation had anything to do with the attack.

A source close to the White House has indicated that the possibility exists that the country sponsoring the attack could have been Libya. A Pentagon source asserted that al-Qaida possibly carried out the attack under the sponsorship of Saudi Arabia. Repeating the latest news...

Chuck turned off the radio. “Why don’t the two of you get some sleep, Buck will bark if anyone comes by,” Chuck suggested.

Maria seemed to be too upset to sleep and she needed to be at her best in the coming days, so Chuck dug out a bottle of Xanax and offered her a 0.25mg tablet.

“Maria, this is just a little something to help take the edge off,” he said. “Since you’re not nursing Teresa, it will be ok for you to take it. It will wear off completely in 8 hours and I really think you should take it.”

Maria took the tiny pill, washed it down with a little coffee and headed for bed. Jose waived goodnight to Chuck as he left to join Maria.

Early the next morning they were all up listening to the radio. Maria had made coffee and was preparing eggs and toast. The announcer was just beginning a recap of the news.

Early estimates put the death toll around 25% in the cities struck by the nuclear weapons. However, if the pattern follows the pattern of the Japanese cities bombed at the end of World War Two, we can expect the death tolls to rise much higher. Military units are just now reaching the bombed cities. President Clinton and his staff have taken shelter at an undisclosed location.

In a press release earlier this morning, the White House indicated that FEMA would respond to the emergency to the best of its ability. However, the White House warned that the magnitude of the attack could stretch FEMA’s resources beyond limits. Congress convened in extraordinary session today at an undisclosed location and passed a joint resolution in support of the President.

“Well, there’s nothing on the radio I didn’t expect,” Chuck said, turning the radio off. “We’ll see if we can get some local news about the Phoenix area later in the day. In the meantime, we need to feed the cattle and horses and see about getting ready for any radioactive fallout that might blow this way. I figure that we should have until this evening before that becomes a concern. It usually takes a storm 24 hours to make it from LA to Phoenix, so the radiation should appear in about the same amount of time. You want to give me a hand with the livestock Jose?”

“Sure,” Jose answered.

The two men walked to the barn and broke apart one of the bales of hay stacked in one corner; they also opened a sack of COB feed and fed the two feeders and the horses. Chuck put down a bowl of Dog Chow for Buck and refilled his water bowl. They then went to the fruit cellar where Chuck retrieved a refurbished Civil Defense Geiger counter. He turned it on and the background radiation level was normal. He turned it back off and they returned to the house.

Maria poured the two a cup of coffee and returned to feeding Teresa. Chuck unlocked his gun safe and began to lay firearms on the table to clean.

Jose's eyes nearly popped out of his head. It appeared that Chuck had at least two or three of most of the weapons. He recognized the rifles from his many visits to the gun stores in the Phoenix area. There were 2 M1A .308 rifles; 3 M16A2 rifles; a cased Remington model M-24 .308 rifle with accessories, including a 3rd generation night sight and a silencer; a Barrett M82A1M with accessories including another 3rd generation night sight, a Swarovski scope and an Elite Iron Suppressor, 2 12 gauge Remington 870 Express Combos, a 20 gauge Remington 870 Express Combo, 2 Ruger 10/22 rifles, a suppressed Ruger Mark II, and 3 Kimber .45 ACP Custom TLE/RL II pistols.

"Close your mouth before a fly lands in there," Chuck laughed. "Here, let me show you how each of these weapons operate and we'll clean them and make sure that they're good to go. Relax, I have a lot more."

"Where...how..." Jose started to ask.

"I bought used guns the entire 20 years I was in the Air Force," Chuck began. "Some of them turned out to be quite valuable. During the 6 years I worked at the gun store, I slowly sold off the valuable items and replaced them with more practical firearms. If I told you how little I have out-of-pocket, you'd call me a liar. A few of the items were damned near impossible to get even with my Class III FFL. The 3rd generation night optics has a MSRP of around seven grand and is sold only to the US government and LEOs.

"Then how..." Jose began.

"Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies Jose," Chuck winked, "Let's just say that I know a lot of people. This is a Surefire M4FA Suppressor. I have one for each of the M16A2 rifles."

"Why?" Jose asked.

"Why what amigo?" Chuck countered.

"Why do you have silencers for the M16's?" Jose explained.

"Jose, I have a silencer/suppressor for every weapon I own except the shotguns," Chuck explained. "And that was strictly a matter of choice. I could have silenced every firearm you see. But, I figured the shotguns were close in weapons and if I had to use one of those, they would already know where I was."

"They who?" Jose asked.

"Anyone who would attack me or mine Jose," Chuck answered, "And the three of you are the mine part."

"You even have suppressors for the M1A rifles?" Jose asked.

“Yep,” Chuck grinned, “But they are not mounted. I could mount them. Hope it never comes to that amigo.”

“Why?” Jose asked.

“Because if we’re down to mounting suppressors on the main battle rifles, it would mean that the Remington and Barrett M82A1M and the M16’s were out of service,” Chuck explained. “With the gunsmithing tools and spare parts I have, it would mean, well...you get the idea.”

“Quite a collection you have here Chuck,” Jose grinned, “Which one am I going to use?”

“Oh this isn’t the entire collection,” Chuck winked, “But some of the stuff I have is on the other side of being legal, so it’s not on display.”

“Like what?” Jose asked.

“You’ll see Jose, you’ll see,” Chuck evaded.

By the time the weapons were disassembled, cleaned and reassembled and Jose was mildly familiar with each, the Geiger counter began to click at an increasing rate. The level wasn’t particularly high, but that’s why Chuck had the fruit cellar. He sent Maria and Teresa to the fruit cellar and Jose and he moved the weapons, small amount of ammo and the baby food back to the fruit cellar. He got Buck and closed the door.

The radiation level inside the shelter/fruit cellar was normal and they remained there for four days before he opened the inner door (air lock) and sampled the background radiation. Nearer to ground zero, he would have applied the rule of 7s and remained in the fruit cellar for $7 \times 7 \times 7$ hours or about 14 days, minimum.

The level was so slight that Chuck considered it safe to return to the house. However, as an added precaution, he hosed everything off with the garden hose to eliminate any particles sticking to any surfaces. The cattle and horses were ok, but low of food. He fed them and then returned to the fruit cellar and led Jose, Maria and Teresa to the house. He even made an exception and let Buck into the house.

Almost none of the radiation had made it all of the way from California. And his flat-roofed concrete home faced east, and like the barn, was dug into a small hill. It might look stupid, but the two foot of sand on top not only camouflaged the home, it protected it.

He turned on the radio and finally picked up a Phoenix station. Even though the bomb that had detonated in Phoenix had not created a nuclear explosion, it had contaminated a large area of metropolitan Phoenix, acting like a dirty bomb. By the time the military had arrived to begin cleanup of the city, widespread panic had set in. So far the military

was trying to restore order and the cleanup progress was negligible. The fact that electrical power was out in Phoenix and the high temperature that July day was expected to reach 110 degrees didn't really help very much.

al-Qaida – Chapter 2 – Pilgrims

“Jose, how much ammo do you have for the .44-40?” Chuck asked.

“Uh...a couple of boxes,” Jose answered.

“I’m going to run up to Apache Junction and pick some up for you,” Chuck replied, “Can you think of anything else we need? I won’t dare make another trip for a while.”

“Let me check with Maria,” Jose suggested.

A few minutes later Jose was back, looking a little embarrassed.

“The only thing that she needs is, well, you know, some feminine supplies,” Jose offered.

Chuck knew what Jose meant, but never having been married, sure wasn’t an expert on the subject.

“Tell her to write down what she needs and I’ll pick it up,” Chuck responded.

Jose handed a slip of paper to Chuck. He figured that Chuck would ask. Chuck put on a shoulder rig and added a Kimber and a couple of mags. He then loaded 11 mags for his M1A and put them in a tote bag.

“Jose, there’s a box of M1A mags in the fruit cellar,” Chuck instructed, “Load them up, 18 rounds per mag. Then, load up the mags for the M16’s; only put 27 rounds in each mag. The springs will handle 30 rounds, but why take a chance? I should be back in an hour; an hour and one-half tops. I’m not expecting trouble just yet, but you should be on your guard. I called ahead on my cell phone and they’re putting together my order right now. If I’m not back in, say, two hours, it will mean that I ran into trouble. You take care of Maria and Teresa.”

With that, Chuck got into the Dodge and headed north to Apache Junction. Mesa was unusually quiet, even for a summer day. If these were normal times and it was the dead of winter, the streets would be teeming with people. It was July, the times definitely weren’t normal and it was already 96 degrees at 9am. He drove the 20 miles to the Junction and parked his pickup in the lot behind the store. He tried the door and it was locked. He rapped on the glass and Terry peered out from behind a gun safe.

“Oh, it’s you Chuck,” Terry said, “Hang on a minute while I get this unlocked.”

Chuck waited while Terry unlocked the door and then unlocked and slid back the accordion security gate.

“Did you get my order ready?” Chuck asked.

“Most of it,” Terry answered, “I can only let you have 14 boxes of .44-40, but I have the military surplus .308, .223 and .45 auto.”

“Do you have dies for my Dillon reloading press in .44-40?” Chuck asked.

“Sure,” Terry replied.

“Give me a set of dies, a mold for the slugs, primers and powder for say 1,000 rounds,” Chuck directed.

“I’ll get that while you unload the cart into your truck,” Terry offered.

“The loading can wait for a minute, Terry,” Chuck said, “I have to make a stop at the 7-11 over there. I’ll be right back.”

The 7-11 was locked up tight and deserted. Chuck pounded on the door but no one answered. Finally, he took out his Kimber and used it to break the glass in the door. He went inside and grabbed every package of sanitary napkins he could find. It took him two trips to his truck to load the stuff up. He threw some jerky, candy bars, soda and beer into a cart and stopped at the register. He added up what he thought everything he had taken was worth, added \$100 to cover the broken glass and threw the money on the counter. By the time he had finished emptying the grocery cart into the back of the pickup, Terry was pushing the heavily laden cart out to the pickup.

Chuck began unloading the cart and putting the ammo and supplies into the pickup. Terry returned to the store and pushed out a handcart with the rest of the things he had ordered. When they had finished, Chuck turned to Terry to settle up for his purchases.

“How much does that come to Terry?” Chuck asked.

“\$2,000 cash,” Terry replied.

“\$2,000?” Chuck asked. “Aren’t you adding on quite a bit for shipping and handling?”

“I am that,” Terry confessed, “But you’ll have to admit Chuck that it’s a seller’s market.”

Chuck counted out 20 \$100 bills. He couldn’t really blame Terry at all. Hell, he was surprised the store was still standing. Oh well, it was only money and he had tied up the loose ends in his supplies.

“Watch your backside Terry,” Chuck said as he got behind the steering wheel, “I have a feeling that it’s going to get a lot worse before it gets better.”

Chuck started the Dodge and headed back to his ranch. He saw a gang of men coming his direction about 4 blocks off. He goosed the truck and soon was in open country. A

few minutes later, he was back at The Ranch. Chuck pulled his pickup through the gate and got out and swung the gate shut. He wrapped the chain around the post and padlocked the chain. "It won't stop them," he thought, "But it might slow them down."

He pulled the truck up to the fruit cellar entrance and began to unload the stuff from the gun store. Jose joined him and Chuck asked him to take Maria her things while he finished unloading the truck. When Chuck had finished, he pulled the pickup over to the house and went inside.

"What was it like out there?" Jose asked, "You weren't gone very long."

"It was as quiet as a graveyard in Mesa," Chuck said, "But I saw a gang of thugs headed my way when I was leaving the gun store. I'll bet Terry is really in for it."

"So you didn't have any trouble?" Jose confirmed.

"Other than Terry gouging me for the things I bought from him, no," Chuck answered. "Let's get the beer, sodas and snacks out of the pickup and put away."

When the two men had finished unloading the other 7-11 purchases, everyone sat down at the kitchen table and they turned on the radio to the local Phoenix station. They listened for a few minutes and then Chuck turned off the radio in disgust. The troops were unable to bring any peace to Phoenix. If anything, the situation appeared to be deteriorating. Chuck thought about Terry alone in the gun store and the mob he saw approaching. He sure hoped Terry would be ok.

Chuck dug around in a closet and brought out some dosimeters and the device to reset them. He reset 4 of them and gave two to Maria, one for herself and one for Teresa. He clipped one in his pocket and handed the last to Jose.

"I completely forgot about the dosimeters," he said. "I really don't think that we need them, but just to be safe, let's wear them for a couple of weeks."

Mentioning the dosimeters frightened Maria. She was already terrified of the possibility of radiation causing Teresa medical problems. Chuck could see immediately that it had been a mistake to even bring the subject up. He decided to let the matter drop; if he said anything else, it would just make things worse. Maybe if he dropped the subject, Maria wouldn't focus on it. He guessed that he had a lot to learn about women and how they thought.

After a light lunch, Maria put Teresa down for a nap and drifted off herself. Chuck and Jose crept out of the house, careful not to disturb either of the females. They were about to saddle up a couple of the horses and check the fence line when a pickup pulling a travel trailer stopped at the gate and honked its horn. They got in the Dodge and drove up to the gate. When Chuck got out of the pickup, he saw that the driver was Terry. Terry's wife and children, plus a woman he didn't recognize, were in the pickup.

“What’s up Terry?” Chuck asked.

“Are you going to let us in?” Terry countered.

Chuck was still a little irked with Terry for gouging him on the ammo and supplies. Had Terry been alone, he would have pressed the point some. The women and children had no part of Terry’s behavior so Chuck unlocked the gate and swung it open. He directed Terry towards the house and he and Jose got back in the Dodge and followed them down to the house. The two trucks stopped next to the house and everyone got out.

Terry spoke first. “Chuck, you know Lynn and the kids. This lady is Lynn’s sister Susan.”

“Pleased to meet you Susan,” Chuck responded, “This gentleman is Jose Chavez. Jose’s wife, Maria, and daughter Teresa are in the house. Why don’t you ladies and children join them there?” Chuck waited until the ladies and kids had entered the home. “What brings you here, Terry?”

Terry noticed the edge in Chuck’s voice. “I looked out just as you were leaving and saw that mob headed my way. I had already pretty much emptied out the store, so I got the hell out of there. Look, Chuck, I’m sorry I asked you for a premium price for the supplies, here, take your money back.” Terry handed Chuck the entire \$2,000.

Chuck counted out 5 \$100 dollar bills and handed the remainder of the money back to Terry. “I don’t object to paying for what I buy Terry, so I’ll keep the extra shipping and handling charges and just pay a fair price for what I bought. Ok with you?”

“Sure Chuck, sorry,” Terry replied quietly.

“It’s forgotten Terry,” Chuck stated, “Now, like I said, what brings you here?”

“Phoenix is coming apart at the seams Chuck,” Terry began. “By the time I got home and had the trailer hooked up, it looked like half of Mesa was burning. I grabbed the women and the kids and headed here. You’re one of the few people outside of the metropolitan area I know. I thought, hoped really, that you might let my family and me hole up here. I didn’t have time to load all of the stuff in my storage room, but, if you will let us stay, I’ll unhook the travel trailer and go back for it.”

Chuck thought about what Terry had said. There would be safety in numbers that much was certain. Terry had been honest about his mistake in judgment and Chuck wasn’t one to hold a grudge. He knew that Terry had divided his basement in half and that the unseen half was packed to the ceiling with supplies of all kinds. “Well, why the hell not,” he thought, “Everyone is entitled to make a mistake or two.”

“Ok Terry, pull the travel trailer over here and we’ll hook it up to water, electric and septic,” Chuck directed.

“Thanks a million Chuck,” Terry grinned, “I promise that you won’t be sorry.”

While he had been building the house, Chuck had lived in a small travel trailer. He had left the utility connections in when he moved into the house and sold off the trailer. They had the trailer hooked up in minutes. Since the trailer only had accommodations for sleeping four, Chuck suggested to Terry that Susan could sleep in the third bedroom in the house.

The three men went into the house for a cold drink. Maria had made iced tea and they sat down at the kitchen table to cool off and drink their tea.

“What do you have for air conditioning for the house?” Terry asked.

“I don’t have any air conditioning Terry, my only source of power is my PV panels,” Chuck explained.

“But, it’s so comfortable in here,” Terry objected, “It must be over 100 outside and it feels like about 75 in here.”

That’s because three sides of the house are buried,” Chuck explained. “The house faces east so it only gets the morning sun. By 11am, when it really starts to heat up, the earth absorbs the heat. It’s not perfect, but I’ve never been uncomfortable. When do you want to go to Mesa and pick up your stuff Terry?”

“I’m not sure,” Terry, responded, “What do you think?”

“If we leave around 5:00, we should be able to load both trucks and my little trailer and make it back before dark,” Chuck suggested. “It will probably take several trips to haul everything you have, so it could take us a week or more.”

“My neighbor has a large empty trailer sitting on his lot,” Terry offered, “Maybe we could borrow it.”

“In that case, maybe we should leave around 3:00,” Chuck corrected himself. “With just the three of us, it’s going to be slow going.”

“I can come along and help,” Susan offered.

Chuck looked at Susan, sizing the woman up. She was reasonably attractive and looked to be in good physical condition. Well, maybe.

“Do you mind if I asked what you do for a living?” Chuck countered.

“My husband Paul and I had our own business until he died,” Susan answered, “We did landscaping. Afraid I can’t pull my weight Chuck?”

“Not at all Susan, I was just curious,” he said, “By all means, we’d be glad for the help.”

At 3:00, Susan and Terry got in Terry’s pickup and Jose and Chuck got in Chuck’s pickup. It took about 30 minutes to get to Terry and Lynn’s home. Terry pounded on his neighbor’s door but no one answered. He peered in a garage window and the car was gone. So, apparently was most of his neighbor’s camping gear. He backed his pickup up to his neighbor’s 24’ trailer and hooked it up.

Meanwhile, the other three were emptying Terry’s garage. When he had positioned the trailer, he led them to the basement and pushed on a knotty pine panel. It opened noiselessly disclosing a huge room filled to the ceiling with all manner of gear and supplies. They began to load the containers of food onto the trailer. When it was full, Terry pointed out the grain mill, water filter and assorted cooking supplies, which they loaded into Chuck’s closed trailer.

It was only 4:30pm when they were done loading. The 24’ trailer was packed high and they tied off the load with some cotton clothesline rope. They had been able to load half of Terry’s supplies. They drove back to The Ranch and quickly unloaded the trailers, just stacking the stuff and not bothering to store it. They were done by 5:45pm.

“If we hurry, we might be able to get the rest of your stuff and be back before dark,” Chuck suggested. “Is everyone one up for a second trip?”

When no one objected, they piled back into the pickups and raced back to Terry’s house. They were able to fit everything into and onto the two trailers and the two trucks and were ready to leave by 7pm.

“We’d better get a move on people,” Chuck said looking at the sun, “There’s barely enough time to get out of town before the sun sets.” Since Arizona didn’t use daylight savings time, they only had about 45 minutes of light left.

They were back at The Ranch in 25 minutes. Maria and Lynn had held dinner for them and they ate in silence before unloading the trailers.

“Terry, I don’t have room in the fruit cellar for most of this stuff,” Chuck explained, “Would you mind if we put the weapons and ammo in the fruit cellar and the food in a tent?”

“It will take a pretty big tent,” Terry laughed.

“No problem,” Chuck smiled, “Jose, give me a hand with the tent in the barn.”

The two men came back from the barn dragging a large canvas bag.

“What do you have there?” Terry asked.

“It’s a surplus military tent,” Chuck explained.

He set up a floodlight and the four of them manhandled the tent until it was set up. They worked for another hour sorting the containers, placing only the food in the tent. The weapons and ammo went to the fruit cellar and the remainder into the barn next to the hay.

“Jose, would you run up and lock the gate for me?” Chuck asked.

“Sure Chuck,” Jose answered, “I’ll be right back.

Chuck suggested that after the hard day’s work in the heat, they would all probably feel better if they showered. He showed Susan where the towels were and he and Terry sat down at the kitchen table to drink some iced tea and cool off. Jose joined them a few minutes later. Terry was explaining the nature of his stored goods.

“My neighbor, the one whose trailer I borrowed,” he said, “Is Mormon. Their church doctrine requires them to keep a year’s worth of supplies on hand. He and I got to visiting one day and he suggested that it’s never a bad idea to have some supplies on hand for a rainy day. He suggested that if we went together and bought supplies, we could get better prices. Anyway, he got me hooked and I started buying the pails of grain and the like. Then I needed a grain mill and before I knew it, I had as much stuff as he had.”

“Where is all of his stuff?” Chuck asked, “In his basement?”

“No. He and his wife bought a piece of land up near the Tonto National Forest and built a cabin,” Terry replied. “They moved all of their stuff up there last year. I suspect that the minute they could, they took off for their cabin. I don’t expect to see them back anytime soon.”

Susan came out wearing a robe and drying her hair.

“Next,” she said.

“Jose, why don’t you go next, so that you and Maria can get to bed,” Chuck suggested.

Susan finished with her hair, poured a glass of iced tea and joined Chuck and Terry. Terry left to start up the generator on his travel trailer to cool off the trailer for sleeping.

“Did I understand you to say that you lost your husband Susan? Please accept my deepest sympathies,” Chuck said.

“Thank you. It’s been two years now,” Susan replied, “He was killed in a car accident. Fortunately we both had large life insurance policies and I haven’t had to work since. I sold the business to a competitor and have a nice nest egg put away.”

You haven't remarried?" Chuck asked.

"No, Paul and I were very close," she said, "We couldn't have children so I worked right along side of him in the landscaping business. I have pretty much come to terms with his loss, though, and occasionally date."

Terry returned just as Jose came out of the shower. Jose and Maria left for their bedroom and Terry headed for the shower.

"I was surprised at how well you handled those heavy boxes," Chuck admitted.

"All those years of landscaping got me into pretty good shape," Susan replied. "I just find it easier and I feel better if I stay in shape."

"Do you have any hobbies?" Chuck asked trying to steer the conversation in a different direction.

"I've really gotten into competitive shooting since Paul died," Susan answered.

"Rifle, handgun or shotgun?" Chuck asked, a little surprised.

"Rifle," She replied.

"Then you might be interested in some of my guns," Chuck suggested. "How about I show them to you tomorrow?"

"I'd love to see them," Susan smiled. "Guess I'd better get some sleep, it was a long day."

Chuck told her goodnight and when Terry finished with the shower, he went to clean up. Chuck showered quickly; the hot water was almost gone. He fell into bed and was asleep in minutes.

al-Qaida – Chapter 3 – Trespassers

Chuck rose and dressed. He checked his dosimeter: 0.5 Rads, 20% of the maximum daily dose. They would have to watch it. He walked into the kitchen and poured a cup of the freshly brewed coffee.

“Maria,” He said, “Could I see your dosimeter?”

Maria handed the tube to him and he looked. No radiation exposure at all.

“I think that we can safely dispense with these,” Chuck said, “There is virtually no radiation.”

Maria’s face broke into a wide smile. “Then my baby is going to be ok?” she asked.

“Maria, Teresa would get more exposure to radiation in the waiting room at the hospital,” Chuck exaggerated. “Put your mind at ease.”

“Whew,” he thought, “Defused that concern.”

“What’s for breakfast?” Chuck asked.

“Jose brought in a few eggs from your chicken coop in the barn,” Maria said, “Is fried eggs and toast ok?”

“How about bacon and cheese omelets?” Chuck suggested. “I’ll be right back.”

Chuck went to the fruit cellar and retrieved a can of bacon and a can of cheese. He returned to the house and took a loaf of bread from the freezing compartment of his refrigerator. He sat the bread on the counter to thaw and handed the cans to Maria. She opened the cans and mixed water with the eggs in a bowl and read the directions on the can of cooked bacon. Jose came from the bedroom holding Teresa. He motioned for Maria to give him a hand.

“Maria, you take care of Teresa and I’ll fix breakfast,” Chuck offered. He whisked the eggs smooth and poured a serving into the hot frying pan. When they appeared ready, he added the cheese and bacon and folded the omelet. Jose was manning the toaster and buttering the hot toast. Chuck put the omelet on a plate and handed it to Jose. He poured a second portion of eggs into the frying pan and repeated the process.

“What smells so good?” Susan said coming out of her bedroom.

“Would you like a bacon and cheese omelet?” Chuck asked while dropping two more slices of bread in the toaster.

“Sounds great,” she replied, “I’m starved.”

He finished her omelet and served it. He started a third for Maria and when it was done, a fourth for himself. He was just sitting down to the table when Terry, Lynn and the kids walked into the kitchen from the trailer.

“There’re more eggs and the fixings for bacon and cheese omelets,” he said, “Want me to fix them?”

“Eat your breakfast Chuck, I can get them,” Lynn offered.

“Ok, thanks Lynn,” Chuck replied.

When breakfast was over, Chuck suggested that they all spend some time on the range he had set up. He needed to get Jose up to speed on the various weapons and he wanted to evaluate how well the others could use their weapons.

Besides, Susan said she was a competition shooter; this he wanted to see. Chuck suggested that Terry and Lynn’s daughter keep an eye on Teresa and invited everyone to join him at the range. He made several trips to the nearby range, first setting up a folding table and a couple of chairs, and then lugging his weapons.

Terry and Susan went out to the travel trailer and Terry came back carrying an M1A rifle and an AR-15. Susan was carrying a custom rifle case. He passed out disposable ear-plugs and they began with Jose and Maria.

Jose took to the M1A and M16 like a duck to water. Maria was more timid, but soon became able to hit the full sized silhouette at 100 yards more times than not. All she needed was practice in Chuck’s opinion. Terry and Lynn had obviously been shooting for some time. Terry was very good with the M1A and the AR. Lynn was fair with the M1A, perhaps anticipating the recoil, but very competent with the AR.

Finally, it came time for Susan to shoot. She asked him to post a 50’ timed fire B-3 target at 100 yards. He thought that she was overly confident, but complied. He could barely see the 3” bullseye with the naked eye. Susan opened her rifle case and removed a highly customized Remington 700 scoped rifle. She fired a string of 10 shots and asked Chuck to retrieve the target. When he got down to the target area and reached for the target, he almost had a heart attack. All ten holes were touching and the group couldn’t have been 1” at the most. He carried the target back to the table shaking his head.

Chuck handed the target to Susan and said, “I haven’t seen shooting like that in a long time Susan. Wow!”

Susan looked at the target. “I’m a little off today, that group shouldn’t have been more than $\frac{3}{4}$ ”.

“Huh?” Chuck responded.

“Chuck, this rifle is guaranteed to shoot ½ MOA or better,” Susan explained, “Typically, I shoot about ¾ MOA. I guess I need to practice some more.”

“Lady just make sure you’re point the rifle at someone else,” Chuck laughed.

Chuck set up the Barrett M82A1M and laid out a box of .50 BMG match. Susan tried the big rifle on a standard 6” bull and shot a tight group. Chuck fired the Barrett M82A1M next and although his group contained ten shots, his group was half again bigger than Susan’s. He didn’t even bother with the M-24, opting instead to see how well she did with the M1A and M16. The woman was a natural shooter. After firing a couple of rounds to become familiar with each weapon, she could shoot a tight group with each.

Finally, they addressed the handguns, setting a B-3 up at 50’. Maria flinched every time she fired and missed the target several times. Jose took his father’s SAA .44-40 and kept 5 of his six shots in the black. All six were on the paper. Terry and Lynn produced Browning Hi-Powers from their belt holsters and both shot well. Susan borrowed Lynn’s Browning and shot about average with the handgun. Finally, Chuck took his turn with his Kimber .45 auto. He put 6 in the black and re-holstered the pistol. “Yep,” he thought, “Still works.”

They returned to the house and sat down to clean the weapons. Maria got Teresa from the bedroom and began feeding her. Susan cleaned her own rifle, turning down Terry’s offer to clean the rifle for her. Terry cleaned both his weapons and Lynn’s and Chuck and Jose cleaned the others.

“It seems to me that Jose should carry a M1A and Maria the AR,” Chuck suggested while they were cleaning the firearms. “Maria will need a lot of practice before she is any good with a handgun. Personally, I’d prefer that she carry a handgun at all times; but, until she can shoot the thing, she’d be better off with the AR.”

“Chuck, I need a lot of handgun practice myself,” Susan offered, “Do you have any other handguns besides the Kimber .45 autos?”

“I have a suppressed Ruger Mark II,” he offered.

“That would be perfect!” Susan excitedly explained. “I’ll take Maria under my wing and teach her to shoot the Ruger first. Once she gets over the flinching, she’ll be fine. Terry, what do you have that might be a suitable handgun for Maria?”

“Susan, if you name it, I probably have it,” Terry grinned. “I have several Glocks in 9mm, .40 S&W and a couple in 10mm. I have some smaller handguns, too, like a Walther PPK in .380. Once you get Maria more comfortable with a handgun, she can try the weapons until she finds something she is comfortable with and can shoot fairly well.”

“Good,” she said, “I’ll find one that I can shoot well, too.”

Buck began to bark. Chuck knew the tone of the bark; someone was trying to get onto The Ranch. He inserted a magazine in his M1A and told Jose to do the same. Terry loaded his M1A and the three of them prepared to check on the problem.

“I’ll cover your backs,” Susan announced.

“Perfect,” Chuck acknowledged. “Let’s go fellas.”

The 3 men climbed into the Dodge and drove to the gate. A group of teenagers, some of them armed with handguns, were trying to break the lock on the gate. When the pickup approached, they backed off.

“Help you folks?” Chuck inquired, holding the M1A at a low ready position.

“Hey mister,” one of the kids said, “Let us in.”

“Why should I do that?” Chuck asked.

“It ain’t safe in Phoenix no more,” the leader replied.

“It isn’t particularly safe here either, young man,” Chuck replied. “We can give you some food and water, but you will have to move on.”

The teenagers visited among themselves for a minute and the leader finally said, “Ok we’ll move on. Can we have the food and water?”

“Sure,” Chuck replied, slinging the M1A and moving to the back of the Dodge to get a case of MRE’s and a canteen. He had just picked up the case of MRE’s when a shot rang out. He dropped the MREs and began to unsling the M1A. The teenaged leader of the group was flying backward, a bullet hole in the bridge of his nose. The other teens were caught with their handguns in various stages of draw, none pointed toward the 3 men.

“Drop the guns,” Terry commanded.

The teens, taken by surprise at the sudden demise of their leader, quickly dropped their handguns.

“Now MOVE OUT!” Terry commanded.

The teens hesitated and then slowly began to walk down the road away from the property, leaving their leader lying in the dirt. The men watched until they were out of sight. Jose opened the gate and collected the assortment of handguns.

“What do you want to do with this?” Jose asked pointing to the body.

“Leave it lay,” Chuck answered. They locked the gate and got back into the Dodge to return to the house.

“Which one of you shot him?” Chuck asked.

“Not me,” Terry said.

“Not me,” Jose parroted.

“Oh,” Chuck replied.

When they arrived at the house, a slightly shaken Susan was standing, rifle in hand.

“Did you shoot that fella?” Chuck asked Susan.

“I had him in my scope and when he brought up the pistol,” Susan replied shakily, “I just fired. I never shot anyone before,” Susan replied softly.

“You saved our lives,” Terry said, “That’s for sure.”

“Jose, would you keep watch for the next couple of hours in case they decide to come back?” Chuck asked.

“Sure Chuck,” Jose replied.

Chuck could see that Susan was distressed, but she obviously wasn’t coming apart at the seams. He suggested that they go in for a cup of coffee. Inside the house, Maria was trying to calm Teresa. Apparently the gunshot had frightened the baby.

“What happened?” Maria demanded.

“Just some punks trying to force their way in honey,” Jose responded. “Susan stopped them with one shot.” He didn’t mention the results of that one shot to Maria; there would be time for that later.

Susan was drinking coffee and her nerves appeared to be settling down; at least her hands had stopped shaking.

“Gutsy gal,” Chuck thought, “We owe her big time.”

The rest of the day was fairly quiet. No more intruders appeared at the front gate and the men took turns keeping an eye on the gate. They tuned in the local radio station, but it was off the air. They changed the radio to the ABC news outlet in Flagstaff and listened to the national news.

We are waiting for President Clinton to address the nation, the announcer said. I'm here with former Secretary of State George Schultz. Mr. Secretary, what do you know of the President's announcement?

Not a thing Christopher, Schultz replied, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if he announced that Libya was somehow involved in the whole affair.

Thank you Mr. Secretary. We take you now to the President of the United States, the announcer stated.

My fellow Americans, President Clinton began, The CIA has determined that members of the organization known as al-Qaida, under the direction of Osama bin Laden, delivered the nuclear weapons to our nation. The CIA has been able to determine that bin Laden purchased the weapons from Col. Muammar Qadhafi who has long been suspected of purchasing several of the portable nuclear devices from a member of the former Soviet Union military.

Accordingly, I have directed that the Armed Forces of the United States proceed with retaliatory steps against Libya and the forces of al-Qaida, currently operating from the country of Afghanistan. Even as I speak, elements of the 6th Fleet are attacking targets in Libya. A flight of B-2 bombers launched several hours ago from Whitman AFB and have bombed targets in Afghanistan.

"A follow-up strike of Tomahawk cruise missiles was launched from US Naval forces in the Indian Ocean. The United States will not rest until the perpetrators of this Godless attack are made to pay for their atrocity. I have asked Congress to issue a formal Declaration of War against the countries of Libya and Afghanistan.

As a result of these vicious attacks, a period of unrest has broken out across the country. Our Armed Forces, in a joint action with the state National Guards that have all been federalized, are attempting to restore order. Looters will be shot. Persons violating the curfew, which has been in effect since my declaration of martial law, will be detained until further notice.

I have issued an Executive Order requiring that the ATF to seize all firearms registered under the National Firearms Act and all assault weapons in the hands of the American public. I request that all law abiding citizens surrender their assault weapons and NFA weapons at their nearest law enforcement office. Persons refusing to comply will be subject to unlimited detention and/or imprisonment.

Good night and God bless you, Clinton said ending his speech.

"It will be a cold day in Hell before I turn in any firearms," Terry flatly stated.

"That goes for me, too," Chuck agreed. "However, just to be on the safe side, let me

show you something.”

He led the group to the hall coat closet. He pulled up on a coat hook and the back wall released disclosing a small space just large enough to store the forbidden weapons.

“I built this storage space never expecting to have to use it,” Chuck explained. “If the feds show up, we can store the illegal weapons in here. We’ll keep out the .22’s and shotguns, since I doubt that they will bother with them. There is a similar setup in the fruit cellar Terry, I suggest that you put your weapons in that storage.”

“I have a lot of firearms,” Terry replied.

“It’s a big space,” Chuck explained.

They transferred all but 4 of Terry’s weapons to the fruit cellar storage compartment. He kept the M1A, 1 AR and their Browning Hi-Power pistols out. Chuck emptied his gun safe’s contents, excluding the .22 rifles and the 870 shotguns, with the longer barrels attached, into the coat closet storage. The coat closet storage was left open to permit them to dump the remainder of their illegal weapons into the closet at a moment’s notice. Buck would provide them more than enough warning.

“I figured that something like this would happen when they passed the assault weapons ban,” Chuck announced. “If the LEO’s show up, everyone just say *Baa*. In the meantime, I guess we had better get that body and bury it deep. I don’t want to have to explain that to anyone.”

“What about my rifle?” Susan asked.

“Looks like a hunting rifle to me,” Chuck winked. “Terry, did I see you putting some Winchesters and Colts in the fruit cellar storage?”

“Yes,” Terry replied, “Why?”

“Do you have a Winchester .44-40 rifle and maybe a Colt SAA .44-40 revolver?” Chuck asked.

“Sure do,” Terry replied, “Do you want me to get them for you?”

“Yes, and if you have a gun belt and holster,” Chuck confirmed, “Bring them too.”

“Going western on us?” Susan smirked.

“Not really, but the LEO’s would expect us to be armed,” Chuck laughed.

“I have a bolt action .223 rifle,” Terry added, “Maybe I should dig that out, too.”

"Why?" Chuck asked.

"There is a lot of .223 ammo in the fruit cellar," Terry explained. "If they do show up and start searching, how are we going to explain all of that ammo? Susan's rifle is a .308; that will explain the .308 ammo. Lynn and I have 9mm pistols so that will explain the 9mm ammo. You had better keep out a .45 auto to explain the .45 ammo. We can move the .50BMG ammo to the storage closet."

"Let's do that now," Chuck agreed, "I'm getting tired of playing musical guns."

When they had made the cosmetic changes to their firearm setup, they ate lunch. After lunch, while enjoying a second glass of iced tea, Jose said, "How much trouble would it be to pull our house trailer down here to The Ranch Chuck?"

"That depends," Chuck replied, "Is it still on wheels or is it on stands?"

"Still on wheels," Jose replied.

"It shouldn't take long," Chuck responded. "All we have to do is disconnect the utilities and air up the tires. Why? Do you want to move it down here?"

"Yes," Jose replied, "If you wouldn't mind."

"Let's do it," Chuck answered, "Susan, are you up to keeping an eye on everything here?"

"No problem," Susan replied.

It took the men the better part of three hours to disconnect the utilities, haul the trailer to The Ranch and park it next to Terry's trailer. The house trailer was old and only 10' wide by 48' long. Any bigger and Chuck wouldn't have managed it with his pickup. As it was, it proved to be a bit of a challenge until they moved some of the furnishings around to better balance the trailer. Once set, they hooked up the utilities and returned to the house for iced tea.

"Jose, you can run the diesel generator after sundown to cool off the trailer," Chuck explained. "For the time being, I think Maria and Teresa would be better off spending their time in the house during the day. Do you have any spare propane tanks for the trailer?"

"No, just the two twenty-five gallon tanks," Jose replied, "But they're both full."

"We will have to get back up to the Junction and try and find some more filled tanks one of these days," Chuck acknowledged.

al-Qaida – Chapter 4 – LEOs

Before he went to bed that night, Chuck made sure to mention to Jose to not gather any more eggs. He needed to increase the size of his flock of chickens if they were to be able to eat chickens in the future. Jose had moved their things back to his and Maria's trailer. That was fine with Chuck; maybe there would be enough hot water now for him, too. After working out a guard rotation with Terry and Jose, he retired to get some sleep before his turn at guard duty came. They had a 4 on/8 off schedule for now; maybe they could change it later.

The next morning, after a breakfast of pancakes and coffee, Chuck decided to make a trip to the Junction. Terry and Susan stayed behind to keep an eye on the property and the families. Jose directed Chuck to the propane dealer who usually serviced his trailer. When they arrived, the place was deserted. They found a delivery truck full of filled bottles. Jose wanted to hot wire the truck and drive it back to The Ranch, but Chuck thought it better that they should transfer the bottles to his pickup. He backed his truck up to the delivery truck and they moved 18 twenty-five gallon and 6 five gallon bottles to his pickup.

When they arrived back at The Ranch, the gate was open and a black AFT van was parked at the gate. An officer, decked out in the popular black bullet proof vest and fatigues stopped them.

"Can I help you?" Chuck asked.

"That depends on who you might be mister," the ATF agent said, "Show me your identification."

Chuck and Jose fished out their driver's licenses and showed them to the AFT agent. The agent looked at the ids and stepped off to speak into his handheld radio.

"Go on up to the house," he said, "They're expecting you."

When they got to the house and climbed out of the pickup, an AFT agent removed their Colt SAAs. A Pinal County deputy sheriff was standing there while several of the black clad figures searched the house, barn and fruit cellar. The deputy just shrugged his shoulders and handed Chuck a federal search warrant. Chuck and Jose waited until the ATF agent, apparently in charge approached him.

"You're Charles Tunis?" the agent asked.

"I am," Chuck responded.

"Tunis, according to our records, you have two full auto M1A assault rifles, 3 M16's, a Ruger Mark II with suppressor, and several other suppressors," the agent said, "Where are all of those weapons?"

"In Phoenix." Chuck replied.

"What do you mean?" the agent inquired.

"When I was forced out of the gun shop," Chuck explained, "I left all of my NFA registered weapons at the shop on consignment. I didn't have any use for them and I needed the money."

"Do you have any proof of that?" the agent asked.

"Just a receipt for the weapons," Chuck said.

"This highly irregular," the agent said, "Show me the receipt."

Chuck led the agent into the house and pulled a file folder from a desk drawer.

"My Class III license is in there together with all of the purchase records and tax stamps for the NFA weapons," he said, "You'll also find a receipt listing the weapons and signed by the new owner of the store attesting that I left the weapons there on consignment."

"We'll take these records with us," the agent said.

"No you won't," Chuck insisted, "There is a copy of the receipt in the folder you can take and you can take the FFL, since I don't need it any more. But, I still legally own those weapons and I have to be able to prove I paid the tax."

"I am afraid that we may have to detain you Tunis," the agent said.

"For what?" Chuck asked, "I've cooperated fully with you and supplied written confirmation of my conformity with the law. Besides, you can seize the weapons at the gun store any time you want, can't you?"

"Afraid not Tunis," the agent said, "The gun store was looted and burned to the ground."

"What about my store?" Terry asked.

"Who are you and what store is that?" the ATF agent asked.

Terry handed the agent his Arizona driver's license. "I own the store at 1234 Main Street in Mesa," he explained.

"Owned," the agent replied. "Looted and burned to the ground," the agent explained.

"Well, are you going to arrest me too because my shop was looted and burned to the ground?" Terry asked in a raised voice.

“Well...” the agent began.

“Agent Thompson,” the deputy sheriff spoke up, “As far as I can see, these people have complied fully with the law. The Sheriff specifically instructed me that if they wouldn’t cooperate with you that I was to assist in their arrest. He also instructed me that if they were in compliance with the law, I was to back them and call for backup if you feds got out of line. Do I call for backup or is the matter closed?”

Agent Thompson thought about the implications of an open fight with the Pinal County Sheriff’s department. He didn’t like the implications of that, because it could damage his career. This Tunis fellow had all of the right paperwork, had complied with his every request and seemed to have friends he hadn’t counted on.

“Ok, you get a pass for now,” Thompson said, “But we’ll be keeping an eye on you.”

“Can Jose and I have our revolvers back now?” Chuck requested, “Or is a Colt SAA .44-40 considered an assault weapon, too?”

The agent’s reluctantly returned the revolvers to the men. They got in their vans and left the property.

“That was close,” Terry said. “Buck started barking when they crashed the gate. We barely got the weapons in the hall closet compartment before they were pounding on the door. They kicked in the door, disarmed us and searched the house from top to bottom. When they saw all of the ammo in the fruit cellar, I pointed to our various weapons and said that we were just being prepared.”

“They buy that?” Chuck asked.

“Probably not, but they couldn’t prove otherwise,” Terry replied. “How did you come up with that consignment receipt?”

“Typed it up myself and slipped it into the paperwork when the store sold,” Chuck admitted. “There was so much paperwork that I figured they wouldn’t catch it. I got lucky, they didn’t.”

“Then your NFA firearms are now all off the books?” Jose asked not understanding.

“Probably not,” Chuck replied, “But they have to find them first. They have so many weapons to seize that I doubt we’ll hear from they again.”

“But that agent said...” Jose began.

“That they would be keeping an eye on me?” Chuck laughed. “They are going to be so busy ducking and dodging bullets from all of the other Americans that they will be trying

to abuse that they won't have time to keep that empty threat. And now that we've had our ATF inspection, I guess it would be ok to show you the rest of my toys."

Chuck led the group to the barn. With Jose's help, he moved the pile of hay bales to another location and then dug into the adobe floor of the barn. He had soon exposed a small trapdoor. He opened the door and descended a ladder, bidding the group to follow him.

"I got the idea from the movie *Terminator 2*," he explained. "Remember when they went down south and opened up Sarah's weapon cache? Seemed like a good idea to me. And, not one of these beauties is on anyone's books."

The long, narrow room had a rack on one side that ran the full 15' of the room. The rack was filled with an assortment military weapons including HK MP5's, more M16s, M203 grenade launchers, M79 grenade launchers, AK-47s, AK-74s, and SKSs. Beneath the guns were cases of ammo and several cases of the older M-61 grenades. Two crates were labeled, Explosive, M-112, C-4.

"I also have some det cord, and an assortment of detonators for the explosives," Chuck explained. "Let's get out of here and get this closed back up. The firepower we have outside is probably more than we need. Jose, get up the ladder and I'll hand up a couple of boxes to you."

Jose climbed the ladder and Chuck passed up a case of the M-61 grenades, a case of M406 40mm High-explosive rounds, a case of M680 40mm White smoke canopy rounds and a case of AN-M8 HC White smoke hand grenades. When he exited the cache, he carried three of the M203 grenade launchers. They closed the lid to the cache, kicked a little dirt on it and sat two bales of hay on top. The group returned to the house and sat down at the kitchen table.

Chuck retrieved his 3 M16s from the hall closet hideaway and attached the M203s to the weapons. He carefully explained the operation of the M203 to the group and told them to never carry it loaded. If they needed to launch a grenade, it only took a few seconds to insert the round into the launcher.

He also demonstrated the proper handling of the hand grenades. When he was satisfied that everyone, including Maria, understood everything they needed to know about the safe handling and operation of the explosives and M203, he told them that he would dig out a box of practice rounds for the M203 and they could practice its use tomorrow.

The three men unloaded the bottles of propane into the barn. Like the house, the barn never got much over 75 degrees, even on the hottest afternoon. As long as he was in the barn anyway, Chuck re-entered the cache and picked up a case of practice rounds for the M203 launchers. They sat down for a late lunch of tuna sandwiches and soup. After lunch, Jose, Maria and Teresa took a nap in the spare bedroom.

“You are a most surprising woman,” Chuck complimented Susan.

“In what way?” Susan asked.

“Aside from the obvious that you’re very attractive,” Chuck began, “You worked shoulder to shoulder with us loading Terry’s stored goods. Then, we go to the firing range and you embarrass the rest of us with your shooting.”

Susan brushed off the comment about her being attractive and addressed Chuck’s other remarks. “I told you I stayed in shape. Working in landscaping, one tends to move a lot of bags of fertilizer and other heavy stuff. As far as the shooting goes, I may have out shot you with the rifle, but you’re no slouch yourself. I don’t know if I’ll ever be as good with a handgun as you, how did you get to be such a good shot?”

Part of it is some sort of natural instinct, but most of it is practice, Susan,” Chuck replied. “You seem to have the instinct for the rifle and you obviously have practiced a lot. How did you get started shooting?”

“A while after Paul died,” She began, “I dated a man who was really into the shooting sports. He got me started shooting a rifle and I found that I really enjoyed it. He turned out to be a jerk and I stopped seeing him, but I was hooked. I joined a shooting club and when I got to be pretty good, bought the Remington rifle. One of the men tutored me and I eventually began shooting competition. I’ve never won a match, but came close a couple of times.”

Buck barked and Chuck grabbed his M1A. He went out to see what Buck was barking at. He scanned the entire ranch from the roof of his home but didn’t see anything out of order. He returned to the house and put his M1A back in the open gun safe.

“Just a rabbit, I guess,” Chuck said to Susan, “Do you have any other hobbies besides the shooting?”

Not really,” Susan replied, “The shooting requires a lot of practice. Tell me a little bit about you.”

“Twenty years in the Air Force,” Chuck started, “Retired and ended up in Phoenix. There wasn’t any demand for my particular skills in the civilian market and after a short stint as a security guard I ended up working at that gun store. I bought in and was there 6 years when they sold out. That’s about it really.”

“Silly, I wasn’t asking for a job resume,” Susan laughed, “Tell me about you. Have you ever been married or are you a perpetual bachelor?”

“Almost married once,” Chuck admitted, “But I re-upped and got transfer orders to another base. She said she wasn’t going to be a camp follower and that ended that. Aside from collecting guns and building this ranch, I don’t have any hobbies. I don’t even like

to watch TV.”

“I noticed that you didn’t have a TV,” Susan replied, “What’s that all about?”

“Back in my service days, I used to watch TV,” he answered, “But it just kept getting dumber and dumber. And the things they advertise on TV these days don’t belong on TV, in my opinion. It got to the point that the only thing I watched was the news. Then, the TV newscasters seemed to change to the point where they were creating news rather than reporting it. I got fed up and quit watching TV. Anyway, it took me quite a while to build this house and the barn. Didn’t have time to watch TV.”

“Did you build it all by yourself?” Susan asked.

“Yes, although a few times I wished I had help,” Chuck replied. “The hardest part was putting on the roof. The house has a large beam running end to end. I had a bear of a time getting that in.”

“How did you happen to decide on an earth roof?” she asked.

“I was at the point where I was going to put on a standard roof,” he responded, “Then I checked on the shingles. They are pretty expensive. So, I just laid OSB over the ceiling joists and put down three layers of tarpaper. I rented a machine to melt the tar and mopped it on. Mopped the walls of the house, too. Then, I started shoveling the sand. Got a good roof at a good price and it really keeps the place cool. If I shovel another couple of feet of sand on the top, it would probably be even cooler.”

“That’s very interesting,” She said.

“Do you ride?” he asked looking at his watch.

“Ride?” Susan replied.

“Horses, I meant. Do you ride horses?” Chuck asked.

“Occasionally,” Susan answered.

“It’s cooling off some and I need to exercise the horses, would you like to go for a ride?” he asked.

“Sure,” she said, “Let me get out of these sandals and into some boots.”

While Susan changed, Chuck saddled two horses. He led the horses over to the house and tied them to a hitch ring. He went inside, put on the SAA and got the .44-40 rifle and put it in the scabbard. He stood waiting for Susan. She had changed into jeans and a western cut shirt and was wearing a western hat.

“Now who’s going western?” Chuck laughed.

“When in Rome,” she said as she mounted.

Forty acres isn’t a big ranch. He dismounted at a gate on the south end of the property and they rode east for about an hour.

Somewhere around here,” he said, “Is the Lost Dutchman Mine.”

“Get serious,” Susan laughed, “Weavers Needle must be 30 miles or more north of here.”

“Oh, what do you know about it?” he asked.

“I have a booklet at the house called *Quest for the Dutchman’s Gold the 100-year Mystery!*,” she replied, “You can read it sometime.”

“I’ll take you up on that, sometime,” Chuck said. “Well, I suppose we had better head home.”

By the time they had returned to The Ranch, it was getting late. Maria was waiting supper and Jose was clearly irritated.

“The next time you go riding,” Jose insisted, “Let someone know. I was worried until I saw that the horses were gone. Besides Chuck, these aren’t normal times; we had to kill someone yesterday!”

After dinner, they turned on the radio and listened to the Flagstaff station. Apparently Clinton had ordered a nuclear strike on Libya. Most of the Middle East countries were up in arms. Of course, they couldn’t go to the UN; someone had destroyed the UN with a suitcase bomb.

On the home front, the military was being challenged at every turn in their attempts to restore order. In Alabama, 12 ATF agents had been killed when they attempted to confiscate the weapons from a group of, in the announcer’s words, radical survivalists.

President Clinton had issued a series of Executive Orders increasing the powers of FEMA in an attempt to help the survivors of the cities hit by the nukes. People were being taken to relocation centers to provide them with food and shelter. One such shelter had been established in Phoenix because of the unrest in that city.

Chuck swore under his breath when he heard that last piece of news.

“Dang it,” he said, “I figured it would come to that. You watch, tomorrow or the next day, Clinton will issue another Executive Order banning firearms completely.”

“What are we going to do?” Maria wailed.

“Nothing,” Chuck replied, “Not one cotton picking thing. We have everything we need here. If some folks show up that we know and/or feel that we can trust, we should let them in. There’s safety in numbers and all that these 40 acres of chaparral need is water. We can grow enough food to feed an Army.”

“And arm them too,” Terry laughed referring to Chuck’s cache of arms.

“I half expected to see some of the people that I used to work with show up,” Chuck said, “We had several cookouts down here and they all know where The Ranch is. But it has been a week and no one has shown up, so maybe they aren’t coming.”

“Didn’t most of them live on the west side of Phoenix?” Terry asked.

“Yes, why?” Chuck replied.

“That’s a pretty long walk if they’re on foot,” Terry explained, “I wouldn’t count them out yet.”

“Do you think that we should drive out tomorrow and look for them?” Jose asked.

“No, Jose, we’d better stay here,” Terry responded, “If they are going to make it here, they should begin arriving tomorrow.”

“I’ve got the first shift tonight,” Chuck commented, “Guess I’d better get up on the roof.”

Chuck got out his M-24 and changed the night sight for the day sight. He was about to leave when Susan asked, “Want some company for a while?”

“Sure,” he smiled.

The two went up to the roof and sat down on the ground to watch The Ranch. Meanwhile, back in the house, Lynn gave Terry an odd look.

“That’s strange,” Lynn said.

“What’s that dear?” Terry asked.

“Susan,” Lynn replied, “I thought she had sworn off men completely after her experience with that jerk a year or so back.”

“I wouldn’t worry about Susan,” Terry replied, “She knows her own mind. Anyway, they are about the same age and have a few things in common. Chuck has always been such a loner; maybe Susan can get him out of his shell. I don’t know about you, but I’m going to get a shower and get some sleep; I have to relieve Chuck at midnight.”

They rose and walked to the trailer. Jose and Maria followed them and went to their mobile home. About 20 minutes later, Susan returned to the house, took a shower and turned in. Chuck sat on the roof listening to the occasional coyote. "I sure hope that Terry's right," he thought, "If we don't get a group of people together, the feds will steamroll right over us."

al-Qaida – Chapter 5 – Friends

Terry relieved Chuck a few minutes before midnight. Chuck was exhausted, more from emotional strain than from physical exertion. He took a quick shower and was asleep before his head hit the pillow. He dreamed that night of atom bombs and terrorists and of the President. He was squeezing the President's neck in his hands, choking the life out of him when...crack.

The gunshot jolted him out of his sleep. For a moment he couldn't get his bearings. Then he realized that Terry was on watch and was using his night vision equipped suppressed M-24. "Incoming," he thought, and slipped on his jeans and ran to the dining room to get his M1A. Susan appeared in her bedroom door.

"Incoming fire," he whispered loudly. She turned, quickly dressed and hurried to the dining room. Chuck had slipped out and joined Terry on the roof. Susan got her rifle and joined them. It was that time of morning just before the sun rises and the stars are starting to be lost. Terry was lying prone, scoping the property line, but finding nothing.

"See anything?" Chuck whispered.

"Nothing," Terry whispered back. "I don't think the fire was directed our way, I didn't see a muzzle flash."

The three of them lay there on the roof waiting for the dawn to break. Jose joined them a few minutes later.

"It's 4am," he whispered, "Was that a shot I heard?"

"Definitely," Chuck assured him in a lower voice. "Terry can't see anything and thinks the shot wasn't directed towards us. Let's just sit tight."

The sun slowly pushed its way over the horizon allowing Chuck to use his binoculars to scan the perimeter of the property. He could see nothing that raised his alarm. Finally, he stood and said, "Jose take over the guard. The rest of us could use some coffee."

Terry, Susan and Chuck climbed down the hill and entered the kitchen. Chuck started a pot of coffee dripping in his Bunn coffeemaker. When it was ready, he poured 4 cups and set two on the table. He slipped out and went to the roof where he handed a cup to Jose.

"Anything?" he asked.

"Nada," Jose answered.

Chuck returned to the kitchen, picked up his cup of coffee and joined Terry and Susan at the table.

“The two of you should get some more sleep,” Chuck suggested.

“See you later,” Terry replied and rose to get some more sleep.

“I’m up for good,” Susan said, “Do you want some breakfast?”

“I could eat a slice of toast,” he replied.

“So could I,” she answered, “But we used the last of the bread last night at dinner.”

“Then I guess today is the day that we learn how to bake bread,” he laughed. “Is there any cereal and milk?”

“Cereal and instant milk ok?” Susan asked the mirth apparent in her voice.

“I knew I should have raised a cow,” Chuck responded, “Sure cereal and instant milk is ok.”

There were three boxes of Post Grape Nuts in the cupboard. “Hmm,” she thought, “You can have any flavor you want as long as it’s Grape Nuts.” She poured them both a bowl of Grape Nuts and got the pitcher of instant milk from the refrigerator. She added milk to both bowls and handed one to Chuck.

“Is Grape Nuts the only cereal you like?” she asked.

“No of course not,” he smiled, “There’s Nabisco Shredded Wheat in the fruit cellar.”

“Anything else?” she smiled.

“Oatmeal,” he added. “I never thought about it. I only eat Grape Nuts and Shredded Wheat cereal. There’s plenty of that and plenty of oatmeal. And, there’s pancake mix. That’s enough of a variety.”

“Obviously,” she thought, “This man is used to living alone.”

“We would have eggs, but I told Jose to let the hens sit,” he continued, “We’ll see if we can grow some chickens.”

“Lynn and I will whip a batch of bread today,” Susan offered, “At least we’ll have toast to go with our instant milk and Grape Nuts.”

Chuck laughed; he couldn’t help himself. “The lady,” he thought, “Has a sense of humor, too.”

“Sorry about that,” he said, “Next time we go to Phoenix I’ll see if we can get any other

brands of cereal. They finished their breakfast and Chuck went to check on Jose.

“Anything yet?” he asked.

“I thought that I saw movement up near the gate a little bit ago,” Jose replied, “But I haven’t seen anything since.”

“Jose, go get some breakfast,” Chuck suggested, “The menu today is Grape Nuts with instant milk plus coffee.”

Jose handed the M-24 to Chuck and Chuck laid his M1A on the ground. Just then, Chuck caught a movement out of the corner of his eye. The M-24 was useless in this bright of light and he hadn’t brought his binoculars with him. A minute or two later a person stood at the gate, cupped their hands around their mouth and shouted “hello the house.” After a brief pause, the person called again. Chuck rose to one knee and returned the hail, “What do you want?”

“This is Jerry Hunt looking for Chuck,” the man answered.

“Stand by,” Chuck yelled.

Just then Jose returned with Chuck's binoculars and Chuck looked at the man. He sure looked like Jerry; so Chuck and Jose got in the pickup and drove to the gate.

“Hey Jerry,” Chuck greeted his former coworker, “Are you alone?”

“No, I have my family and 5 other people from the store with their families,” Jerry replied.

“Have them come over here,” Chuck directed.

Slowly all of the people hiding in the ditch rose and walked to the gate. Chuck scanned the group as they approached. He recognized all of them and most were armed. He handed his M1A to Jose and unlocked the gate.

“As many of you as can hop in the back of the truck,” he said, “I’ll drop you off and come back for the rest of you.”

Two people slipped into the cab and maybe a dozen or so climbed into the back of the truck. Chuck drove them to the house and dropped them off; he then returned for the remainder of the group. When everyone was safely delivered to the house, Chuck made introductions all around.

“I was worried yesterday when you didn’t show up Jerry,” Chuck commented. “But Terry said that if you were on foot that you wouldn’t probably be here until today.”

“Oh Terry’s here too? Great!” Jerry smiled widely. “We would have been here yesterday, but the feet started to give out on us so we slowed down.”

“We heard what sounded like a rifle shot around 3:30am, was that you folks?” Chuck inquired.

“Yes, we had someone approaching our camp and when they wouldn’t respond, I fired one shot into the air,” Jerry explained. “I don’t know who it was, but he or she beat feet out of there.”

“You’re traveling pretty light Jerry,” Chuck observed.

“All we could get out with was our BOB’s,” Jerry acknowledged. “There’re a lot of supplies stored at our homes, but vehicular traffic was heavy and many streets were blocked. When we can get back there, we can pick up a few tons of supplies. Meanwhile all we have is our rucks.”

“Maybe we can do something about that this afternoon Jerry,” Chuck suggested. “In the meanwhile, let’s get you folks settled and fed. I’m afraid that all we can manage this morning is some breakfast cereal with milk and some coffee. Sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it boss,” Jerry grinned, “Everything beats lifeboat rations.”

Lynn and Susan already had bread rising. When the six families showed up Lynn started a second batch of bread and Maria and Susan started handing out paper bowls of cereal and milk and either glasses of milk or cups of coffee to everyone.

“What’s it like in Phoenix?” Terry asked.

“Pretty rough,” Jerry replied, “We came across on Baseline Road. The only traffic we saw was the military and when we heard about the relocation center on the radio, we ducked for cover every time we heard a vehicle approaching. We saw them picking up groups of people and herding them into deuce and a half’s, so we made dang good and sure they didn’t see us.”

“Three things come to mind Jerry,” Chuck said, “First, we only have two pickups plus a small U-Haul sized trailer and a 24’ trailer. Second, we’ll want to steer well clear of the military. I don’t know how much of your stuff we can move at a time. Third, we’re really short on accommodations.”

“Among us, we have 3 RV’s, one small travel trailer and two medium sized trailers,” Jerry elaborated. “The main problem was being unable to move the vehicles.”

“Do you think we can get it all done today if we leave by 2:00pm?” Terry asked.

“I’m pretty sure we can,” Jerry answered, “Our gas tanks are all full or nearly so. But we

might have to round up some propane.”

Chuck was in a real quandary. A movement of this size was sure to attract attention. And, if they were driving around looking for propane tanks, it would only increase the risk. He considered several alternatives and discarded them. He was thinking about calling the Pinal County Sheriff's office when a thought occurred to him.

He was a member of the Pinal County Sheriff's Reserve and had a uniform, badge and the whole 9 yards. He got Jose, Terry, Jerry and the other men together and outlined his plan. They readily agreed so he donned his uniform, pinned on his badge and strapped on the Sam Browne rig.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. Chuck would assume the role of a deputy sheriff assigned to escort the group back to Phoenix to pick up their supplies and clothing. He told Jose to take the Dodge and small trailer back to the Junction and get all the 25 gallon bottles of propane he could find at the dealer. Susan offered to ride shotgun for Jose. They hitched the 24' trailer to Terry's pickup and set off towards west Phoenix. Jose and Susan left at about the same time for the Junction.

The men encountered their first roadblock shortly after they began to traverse Baseline Road from east to west. Chuck bluffed the officer in charge of the roadblock and even got him to call ahead to clear their way. They went from house to house, loading each person's supplies into their RV, travel trailer or trailer. In a span of 3 hours, they were ready to return to The Ranch.

They had an enormous amount of supplies; the only thing they were short of was accommodations for two of the families. Chuck made the group stop at each Circle K they came to and he appropriated anything they could use, especially breakfast cereal. On the way back across Baseline, he noted an RV dealer's place of business.

They arrived at the Ranch around 6:00pm. After they had disconnected the trailer from Terry's truck, Chuck, Terry, Jerry and the two men who needed accommodations for their families got into Terry's truck and headed back to Phoenix. They skirted the roadblocks and were soon at the RV dealer's. They chose two deluxe model RV's, put 10 gallons of fuel in the tanks and located the keys inside the dealer's office. By 7:30pm, they were back at The Ranch.

“I don't know about you,” Chuck said to no one in particular, “But I could eat a horse. Let me get out of this monkey suit and let's eat.”

Jose and Susan had returned from the Junction with the Dodge and the trailer filled with 25 gallon bottles of propane. Jose had manhandled the bottles into the barn with the help of a couple of healthy teenagers. They now had 67 full 25 gallon tanks of propane. After the men had eaten, Chuck suggested that they all get together and assess their situation.

“Ok folks,” Chuck began, “We have accommodations for everyone. There is a spare bedroom in the house and a couple of beds in the fruit cellar. We have nearly 1,700 gallons of propane and a fair amount of food. The RV’s all have their own generators so we’re covered there for a while. I can only see a few problems to overcome. My septic system won’t handle the effluent from this large of a group and my water tank only holds 300 gallons. Any suggestions?”

“Why don’t we go larger on both the septic system and the water tank?” Jerry asked. “We should be able to get all of the plumbing supplies we need at the Home Depot up at the Junction.”

“What about tanks?” Chuck asked.

“If you have a phone book, I’ll look in the Yellow Pages and find dealers,” Jerry suggested. “That beats the hell out of just looking around trying to find what we need.”

“My electrical system is straining to keep up at the moment,” Chuck went on, “We would have to either run the well pump from a generator or come up with an alternative source of energy to run it 24 hours a day.”

“You have a diesel powered generator, if I remember correctly,” Jerry countered.

“I do, but there are less than 500 gallons of diesel fuel in my tank,” Chuck pointed out.

“Chuck, if I didn’t know you better,” Jerry countered, “I’d say that you were being defeatist.”

“Not at all Jerry,” Chuck said, “I’m just being practical. As it was, I thought that I had overbuilt everything. In hindsight, I realize that I under built.”

Jerry had been looking through the Yellow Pages while the exchange had been taking place. He had folded the corners on several pages creating bookmarks. He now offered solutions to all of Chuck’s objections.

“I found a septic system dealer and water tank dealer at the Junction,” Jerry explained. “There is a PV panel dealer in Mesa. There must be a million golf courses in Mesa and we can get all of the golf cart batteries we need. We have 3 pickups and 3 trailers. How about one truck pick up more septic tanks, another pick up water tanks and the third pick up PV panels and then shop the Home Depot at the Junction?”

“Ok with me,” Chuck agreed, “But they had better pick up some battery cables, too.”

“That can wait until the day after tomorrow,” Jerry said. “We’ll have to make a separate trip to scrounge the golf cart batteries. And maybe we can find a farm delivery fuel truck and bring back a load of diesel.”

Chuck had been baiting his friends all along. He wanted to see how resourceful they would turn out to be. The 6 former co-workers from the gun store would make the trips to Mesa and the Junction the next day. Chuck, Terry and Jose would remain at The Ranch making preparations for expanding the septic system and water system. The newcomers would take over the guard duties, too. When the meeting broke up, Chuck got a beer from the refrigerator and plopped down in a lawn chair on his front porch to relax. Susan soon joined him, beer in hand.

"You're a sly one," she said.

"Huh? What do you mean?" Chuck asked.

"You were baiting them," she responded.

"Was I that obvious?" Chuck inquired.

"Not at all," Susan laughed, "But I saw how you were leading them to address each of the problems we face. Pretty clever."

"Thank you, I think," Chuck said. "I worked with these guys, most of them at least, for six years. I just wanted to see if they were as resourceful as I presumed they would be. I figured Jerry for a natural born leader; that was really apparent tonight."

"You're pretty resourceful yourself," Susan commented.

"What do you mean?" Chuck asked.

"What do you think I mean, Deputy Tunis?" Susan laughed.

"Oh that," Chuck grinned, "I've been a reserve deputy for 4 years. Never had to do anything but attend meetings and training sessions. That's twice in the past week that my being a reserve deputy paid off."

"Twice?" Susan asked.

"Yes, twice," Chuck explained, "The Pinal County deputy who was here with the ATF was my training instructor. You don't really believe that the Sheriff gave him any such instructions do you?" Chuck winked. "That was pure ad lib on his part."

"He never let on that he even knew you," Susan countered.

"All part of the act," Chuck explained. "Do you think the ATF would have backed down if they knew we were friends?"

"Probably not," Susan conceded.

“Absolutely not,” Chuck corrected. “Did you happen to catch the news tonight?”

“Yes,” Susan said, “President Clinton issued an Executive order requiring the confiscation of all firearms.”

“Figures,” Chuck smiled. “He just keeps digging the hole deeper and deeper.”

“What do you mean?” Susan asked.

“Oh nothing,” Chuck said, “I just hope that they take out Gore before they take out Clinton. He now has about 60 million Americans, give or take, wanting a change of administration in Washington. Those bleeding heart liberals are so busy saving us from ourselves that they never take the pulse of America.

“I think that their days are numbered. With all of the problems this country is facing, Clinton had no business sending troops overseas. He should have recalled every American soldier back to the US to help restore order and begin the cleanup and rebuilding process. Instead, he’s sending troops to Afghanistan.”

“He was pretty decisive in dealing with Libya,” Susan countered.

“Sure was,” Chuck replied, “And now the whole Muslim world is out to get us. If we had any friends in the Middle East or Muslim countries, Clinton made sure that they all hate us now.”

“What will happen, do you think?” Susan asked.

“Oh, I’d guess an immediate oil embargo,” Chuck responded, “And funds flowing to groups like al-Qaida by the bucketful. We’ve never been able to prove the Saudi connection to al-Qaida, other than the fact that bin Laden is a Saudi; but I’d guess that bin Laden and the other terrorist groups won’t lack for funding. I’d be pretty wary of Iraq, too. There’s no telling what Saddam will do to further his goals. Bush should have taken him out in 1991 when he had the chance.”

“All of this political discourse is too much for me,” Susan announced, “I think that I’ll turn in. By the way, thanks for the cereal.”

Susan rose and went into the house. Chuck finished his now warm bottle of beer and grabbed a quick shower. His mounting pile of dirty clothes reminded him that he’d have to take out time tomorrow to do laundry.

al-Qaida – Chapter 6 – A Growing Settlement

After a breakfast of Grape Nuts, instant milk and toasted homemade bread, Chuck visited with Jerry before they set out for the Junction.

“If they have room on the trailer Jerry,” Chuck suggested, “Have the fellas pick up a couple of automatic washers and electric dryers. We can line dry in the summer, but come winter, we’ll need the dryers. And have everyone keep their eye out for some sheds or something we can house the washers and dryers in.”

“Sure thing boss,” Jerry replied, “We’ll figure out something.”

Jerry and the others departed. Chuck went to sort his dirty clothes so he could do laundry. When Susan saw him sorting the clothes, she offered to do them for him. Never one to look a gift horse in the mouth, Chuck gladly accepted. Susan sure was supportive, it was a shame he hadn’t met her years before.

While Terry laid out stakes for the expanded water system, Chuck and Jose laid out the expanded septic system. With the help of the 4 teenagers, they tried to dig in the concrete like soil to bury the septic system. After an hour’s hard digging with no noticeable progress they gave up. They needed a backhoe or trencher to put in the septic system, without doubt.

By 1pm, the scroungers were back with PV panels, plumbing supplies, 3 septic tanks and 3 1,000-gallon water tanks. Chuck explained the problem of the hard soil to Jerry. Jerry told him there was a backhoe he’d spotted in Mesa, lumber for sheds at Home Depot and washers and dryers to haul back. They would go back for the lumber and laundry equipment. Two of the men could drive the backhoe down to The Ranch. And, oh yes, there was a tandem delivery truck sitting at a Chevron station filled with diesel. Why didn’t Chuck and Terry come with them and drive back the delivery tanker?

The two men sent to Home Depot, loaded the back of their pickup with bags of pre-mixed concrete and the trailer with enough lumber, nails and shingles for a good sized laundry building. The two sent to pick up the washers and dryers brought back 3 of each rather than 2. Chuck and Terry drove the tanker truck back to The Ranch. The last to arrive were the two men driving the backhoe. Tractors moved a lot slower than trucks. The backhoe had a loader mounted on the front of the tractor and it could serve double duty. The trip to collect batteries and cables tomorrow would be their last for a while; there was a lot of construction to complete.

After dinner, Chuck went in to take a shower. His clothes were clean and neatly piled on his bed. He made a mental note to be sure and thank Susan. He could get used to having her around, that was obvious. After he’d showered and changed, he got a large iced tea for himself and Susan. Did she want to sit out on the porch for a bit, he asked? She smiled and joined him.

“Thanks for doing up my laundry Susan,” chuck said, “I really appreciate it.”

“It was nice to have a man to do something for,” Susan said.

“Oh, oh,” he thought, “That sounds a bit possessive, what have I gotten myself into?”

Chuck avoided the political discussion of the previous night, opting instead to outline the construction work that lay ahead of them for the coming week. Susan explained that she had talked Maria into going out for pistol practice the next day. Did Chuck have a Kimber that she could use? Chuck went into the house and retrieved a Kimber from the gun safe together with a shoulder holster and two extra mags. He made a present of the rig and gun to Susan. He told her to get whatever ammo she needed from the fruit cellar. There were plenty of extra magazines for the pistol in the fruit cellar, too.

The next day, one of the men graded a place for the water tank stands and for the laundry room with the front-end loader. He then set about digging holes for the 3 septic tanks. By the end of the day, a sturdy framework for the water tanks had been erected and the slab for the laundry room was poured.

The following day, they used the loader to lift the water tanks into place, plumbed them and hooked up a generator to the pump to start filling the tanks. The loader was used to lower the septic tanks into place, and then the tractor operator resumed digging the trenches for the septic field.

Susan had taken Maria to the range and the suppressed Mark II helped Maria overcome her flinching. Susan was putting all of her shots in the black and was the equal of Chuck with a pistol by the time the session was over. The laundry room was framed out and merely required the installation of plumbing and electrical power before the siding, insulation and interior sheeting could be installed. They planned to use $\frac{3}{4}$ " exterior plywood for the exterior siding and $\frac{1}{4}$ " finished plywood for the interior.

The third day of construction saw the installation of the ten 4 amp PV panels and the completion of the septic field trenching. Another slab was poured for a small building to house the huge collection of golf cart batteries. They used the backhoe to dig a utilities trench to the RV's and trailers. Things were definitely looking up.

Susan and Maria spent another couple hours on the range and Maria selected the .380 PPK for her gun. Its small size was a perfect match for her small hands and by the end of the session her every shot was hitting the target. The laundry room was complete and the washers and dryers were installed. Several clotheslines were run from the end of the laundry room to posts.

On the fourth day, the battery shed was completed and the electrical service hooked up. They could produce 40 amps/hr during the daylight hours and the batteries each could hold 200 amps of energy. The septic outflow lines were installed and the trenches re-filled by hand. The septic field covered two acres, ample room for a large garden. The

utilities to the trailers and RV's were also in and that trench was filled. By evening, they were done with the construction projects and were exhausted.

Chuck was simply too tired to eat. He poured a large glass of iced tea and added extra sugar for the energy. He sat on the front porch idly surveying the changes that had taken place to his ranch over the past two weeks. The population had raised from 1 to 4 to 9 to 33 in short order. All they needed now was some livestock and they would be reasonably self-sufficient.

And, that Susan; he had to admit that she was growing on him. But, at 45, he was pretty set in his ways; he wondered if he could actually adjust to being involved in a relationship, especially with as independently minded person as Susan seemed to be. He pulled himself up short when that thought entered his mind. Whoa there, he'd only known the woman for a couple of weeks, what was he doing thinking about a relationship? Relationships took time to build. Still, they did think a lot alike and had a lot of common interests. Chuck finished his iced tea, took a hot shower and fell into bed to a dreamless sleep.

The next morning over breakfast, Chuck took a minute to really look at Susan. Were it not for the small lines at the corners of her eyes, which bespoke her age, one would take her for a woman in her late twenties or early thirties. She had a nice figure and her western style of dress accented her obvious physical attributes. Her shoulder length brunette hair fairly shined in the light. Our boy was well and truly smitten with the woman and everyone, including Susan, knew it but him.

For her part, Susan was impressed with Chuck. He was ruggedly handsome, in good physical condition, obviously intelligent, clever in a sneaky sort of way and had shown a rare deference to women that most men lacked. The only thing she couldn't understand was why another woman hadn't snagged him long ago. Maybe his fierce independence had frightened other women off.

Personally, she thought it to be his best quality. Chuck would not kowtow to anyone, except to lead them into accepting his thinking on a subject. And, even then, he knew when to back off. She had visited with Lynn and Terry about Chuck. Lynn had cautioned her to go slow, but Terry had remained silent, a grin plastered on his face. His open and honest gratefulness at such a minor thing as her having done his laundry reflected an individual who was self-confident and had nothing to prove to anyone. Susan was well and truly smitten with the man and everyone, except for Chuck and she, knew it.

Chuck inspected the newly completed facilities. The battery shed was large enough to hold 100s more batteries. The laundry room was already in operation, the wives having worked out a schedule among them to share the facility. The PV array was still too small and he wondered if there were more PV panels to be had in Mesa. The 100 batteries would hold 20k amps of energy, equal to 20kw, he thought. There were 7 RV's/trailers, the house, the barn and the well pump to power.

And, they didn't have a large backup generator, what would they do when the sun didn't shine? He tried to do the math in his head. Assuming a 100-amp service for each unit, they would need 1,000 amps per hour times 24 hours or 24,000 amps per day. Well, cut that in half, because they wouldn't be running lights all night. That was 12,000 amps per day divided by 4 amps times 24 hours per panel or 96 amps per panel. 12,000 divided by 96 was 125 panels. Forget the cut that in half part, they needed 250 panels, at least plus 400 more batteries. Were there even 400 golf cart batteries in the whole Phoenix area? Oops, almost forgot about the inverters, he thought; how many inverters do we need? Were his calculations right or had he slipped a decimal somewhere?

Chuck began to get a headache from the mental gymnastics. He tracked down Jerry and asked him how many PV panels were available at that place in Mesa. Lots, Jerry thought, but he didn't have an actual count. What about golf cart batteries? They hadn't even hit one tenth of the golf courses Jerry said, there were plenty of those available. And inverters and charge controllers, Jerry had no idea. Why did Chuck want to know?

Chuck shared his calculations with Jerry. Yes, Jerry thought, they could probably come up with at least 250 PV panels, 400 more batteries and lots of inverters. No, Jerry didn't know where they could find a large backup generator; he'd check the Yellow Pages. Oh, and Chuck hadn't considered the amount of lumber it would take to mount 250 or more PV panels; they'd probably have to clean out Home Depot.

Chuck asked Jerry if he could take care of it for him, he had a headache and had to take some aspirin and rest for a bit. No problem, Jerry assured him, they'd get right on it. Was right now soon enough or did Chuck want it done sooner? Because, Jerry said, if he wanted done sooner, he should have told him yesterday.

Jerry dispatched two pickups with trailers and 6 men, including Jose, to Apache Junction. He got Terry and the two of them headed for Mesa. Two hours later, Chuck heard the blast from a diesel truck horn and came out of the house to see a semi tractor-trailer rig arrive.

"What's the deal Jerry?" Chuck asked.

"Well, there was a semi pulled up to the dealer's loading dock," Jerry explained. "It was empty, but when we looked inside the warehouse, the entire contents of the truck were stacked right there by the door. So, Terry and I used a forklift and loaded the stuff right back on the trailer. Terry will be along in a minute with a trailer load of inverters we pulled from the warehouse. I think we can empty the warehouse in one more trip."

"Do you mean there's more?" Chuck asked, disbelieving.

"Oh hell yes," Jerry answered.

"How many panels and inverters did you get?" Chuck asked.

“Didn’t stop to count them Chuck,” Jerry laughed, “Do you want the panels here or do you want to know how many panels there are in Mesa?”

“Never mind,” Chuck muttered as Terry pulled in with a pickup and trailer loaded with inverters.

It took far longer to unload the truck than to load it since they didn’t have either a forklift or a loading dock. The front-end loader was pressed into service as a makeshift forklift, but they still had to manhandle the materials to the back of the semi. When the semi trailer was empty, Jerry and Terry drove back to Mesa to finish plundering the dealer’s warehouse.

Meanwhile, the two pickups had arrived from Apache Junction and all of the lumber and the inverters were unloaded. They set out for Apache Junction once more, this time with 3 pickups and 3 trailers to salvage more lumber. Shortly after the men had left for the Junction, Terry and Jerry arrived back with the remainder of the contents of the dealer’s warehouse and the forklift.

They left everything on the trailer. By the time the men had arrived back from the Junction, it was time for supper. Over dinner it was decided that they would stop, build a temporary loading dock and then unload the trailer. They could get along with a dirt dock for the moment and build one from concrete when they had more time. They spent the entire next day building the dock, unloading the trailers and inventorying what they had accumulated the previous day. They had over 1,000 panels as near as they could estimate. They counted the number of panels on one pallet and multiplied that by the number of pallets.

They decided to use the semis plus the 3 trailers to haul lumber from the Home Depot. It took them two trips to clean out the large store of usable lumber and hardware. They even latched on to two posthole augers to speed the installation of the solar array. The following day, the semi set out with 4 men and a lot of empty pallets to collect batteries. They barely made it back by dark, but they had a truck full of new and used batteries and 25 cases, each holding 4 1-gallon bottles, of distilled water to service the batteries.

“Jerry, will all of those batteries fit into the battery building?” Chuck asked.

“No way, boss,” Jerry acknowledged, “We’re going to have to double the size of the shed. I figure we can just extend it to double its present length. If we put two people on that, and send two people to scrounge up the wire we need to wire the array, that will leave us 5 men and the teenagers to work on the solar array.”

“Some of us can help,” Susan offered.

“Great,” Jerry replied, surprised at the offer.

Chuck wasn’t a bit surprised at Susan’s offer. He hadn’t said anything to her about help-

ing up to this point because she had taken it upon herself to tutor all of the women in firearms safety and usage. The women for the most part didn't have any bad habits to unlearn and they were at least as adept as their husbands with the firearms. Every woman was equipped with an assault rifle and either a pistol or revolver, depending upon her individual preference. The rack in the cache was looking a little bare because most of the men had only a single MBR or an AR. And, they hadn't found time to practice with the M203's or M79's.

It took them 4 weeks to finish the solar array. A large exhaust fan had been installed in the battery shed to remove the hydrogen gas created by recharging the batteries. One of the guys who had made several trips to Home Depot attached NO SMOKING signs to every side of the battery shed. They had electricity, water, and food. It was time to start looking for more livestock. There had been a large dairy operation south of Mesa just east of Greenfield Road a mile or two. If it was still there, maybe they could buy a few cows for milk and cheese. If they could get a bull, they could produce their own beef. The eggs had hatched and the little flock of chickens was growing rapidly.

During the 4 weeks, Susan had worked right alongside Chuck and a fast friendship formed. The more they came to know about each other, the deeper the friendship. A romance was blossoming and only Susan and Chuck were oblivious to it, Chuck far more than Susan. Susan had confided in her sister Lynn that she liked the man and if ever she were to marry again, the guy would have to measure up to the standard Chuck was setting.

Terry, overhearing the conversation, suggested that Susan had it all wrong. Why look for a man like Chuck when Chuck was right there? Terry didn't reveal that he had been talking to Chuck and that Chuck had as much as admitted that he wanted to marry Susan, but didn't know if she would have him. Weren't women supposed to be the match-makers? He'd have to have a serious word with Lynn.

They set off for the dairy farm on the first day of October in the semi. The farm had turned into an armed camp, a friendly armed camp. After a hesitant start, the parties came together and negotiated a deal that satisfied both. They bought 12 pregnant cows, 4 feeder calves and a truckload of hay. Chuck paid for the entire purchase from his small stock of gold and silver coins.

They hauled the cattle back to The Ranch and returned for the hay. All of the cattle, the 16 Chuck bought, and his two feeders were turned loose to roam the 30 acres of chaparral making up the south $\frac{3}{4}$ of The Ranch. The dairy farm settlement knew of someone with hogs and could arrange for the purchase of two pregnant sows in exchange for two pigs from each litter. Chuck jumped at the chance and arranged to come back in a week for the sows.

Terry had talked to Lynn and Lynn to Susan. Then Terry talked to Chuck and finally, Lynn talked to Chuck.

“Chuck, what are your intentions with regard to Susan?” Lynn asked late one evening when she caught Chuck alone in the kitchen.

“What do you mean Lynn?” Chuck asked thrown for a loop by the question, “I’ve never been anything except a gentleman around Susan.”

“Do you love her, you ninny?” Lynn asked, cutting to the chase.

“Yes I guess that I do,” Chuck replied hesitantly.

“Guess?” Lynn reflected.

“All right, yes I do,” Chuck admitted.

“Then ask her to marry you,” Lynn suggested, “She will either say yes or no.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” Chuck said softly.

“What do you mean?” Lynn prodded.

“That she’ll say no,” Chuck replied in an even softer voice.

“Are you two friends?” Lynn asked.

“Yes, I’ll have to admit that Susan’s probably the best friend I’ve ever had,” Chuck smiled.

“If you asked her to marry you and she said no,” Lynn prodded harder, “Would you two still be friends?”

“I’d sure hope so,” Chuck replied.

“Then ask her, you have nothing to lose,” Lynn suggested.

“I don’t know about that,” Chuck came back at her, “I think that it would just kill me if I had to be around Susan knowing that she’d rejected me.”

“Why would she reject you?” Lynn said playing her trump card, “Hell Chuck if I was single, I’d marry you myself.”

Two nights later Chuck had screwed up his courage and he invited Susan to sit with him on the front porch. He mentally hemmed and hawed for what seemed like forever. Finally, he spoke up. “Susan, I’ve fallen in love with you,” he said, “Will you marry me?” Susan’s response was to plant a large wet kiss on his lips. He looked at her noticing that she fairly glowed in the moonlight. “I take it that’s a yes?” he asked.

“Yes, yes, yes.” Susan said, “A thousand times yes. I thought that you’d never ask.”

“Well, I wanted to be sure of my feelings before I asked,” he said.

“Baloney,” Susan laughed, “It just took you that long to screw up your courage.”

“When...” Chuck began.

“Next Sunday too soon?” Susan asked.

“Not for me,” Chuck replied letting out a long breath. He kissed her again and they began to discuss plans for the wedding. They decided that Jose would stand up with Chuck and Lynn with Susan. They didn’t have a minister or an authorized governmental official but people had been getting married long before there were ministers or government officials. They would exchange simple vows promising to love and honor each other for the rest of their lives. Obey wasn’t to be part of the vows; it was old fashioned and they were equals in every way. Terry would state the classic line, “Those whom God had joined together, let not man put asunder”; and declare them to be husband and wife.

Chuck had the jitters for the rest of the week. Would he measure up to her expectations? Would...? By the time for the wedding came on Sunday, he was a nervous wreck. The ceremony was over in minutes and the newly married couple joined their friends to celebrate the joy of the moment. The Reception lasted until late in the evening. The newlyweds made no effort to ditch the Reception early. Finally, Lynn started nudging everyone quietly suggesting that it was time to end the party.

Unbeknown to the couple, Lynn and Maria had slipped off during the reception and moved Susan’s things to Chuck’s bedroom. She whispered this to Susan when she congratulated the couple for the last time. Chuck was strangely at ease with Susan sharing his bed.

The next morning, they had to endure another round of congratulations. What? Hadn’t anyone thought that they’d make it through the first night of a lifetime union? The couple honeymooned at the target range, Chuck with his M-24 and Susan with her custom built Remington. By the end of the hour-long practice session, they were both shooting groups ranging from $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ " and had developed a playful rapport with each other, each trying to outshoot the other. They were realizing how well suited they were for each other and how truly equal they were.

al-Qaida – Chapter 7 – Loose Ends

Chuck and Susan had barely returned to the house when Jerry came knocking on the door.

“Hi Jerry,” Chuck greeted his friend, “What’s up?”

“I was just going over the loose ends,” Jerry said, “We have a few.”

“For example?” Chuck asked.

“Never got around to picking up a backup generator,” Jerry replied, “Then there’s the temporary loading dock we haven’t made permanent. And weren’t we going to practice with the M203s and the M79s?”

“Oh, you’re right,” Chuck said. “How about you chase down the generator? I’ll get with the others and we’ll start to frame a loading dock and pour a slab for the generator. When we’re all done with those loose ends, we’ll take time to practice with the grenade launchers. Fair enough?”

“I’m on it,” Jerry smiled and left.

“Want to help me figure out where to put the loading dock?” Chuck asked Susan.

“I thought you would put it over by ledge Chuck,” Susan said, “All you would need to do is pour a slab, haul in a little dirt and you’d have a loading dock all done.”

“Shoot,” Chuck replied, “That never occurred to me. You’re absolutely right. I’ll get someone to grading with the loader right away. Honey, you’ve just saved us a day’s work.”

“Hey fella,” Susan purred, “Sweet talk like that will get you anywhere,” and then, she burst out laughing at the expression on his face.

Four hours later when Jerry pulled in with a pair of 150kw generator, the slabs for the generator and loading dock were already curing in the warm sun.

“Dang,” Jerry said, “Where did you come up with the idea for the loading dock? I figured it would take you all day.”

“Susan’s idea,” Chuck admitted. “How did you make out with the generator?”

“I have a pair of 150kw diesel powered units and a 400 amp transfer switch,” Jerry smiled. “We can set the generators tomorrow and build the shed around them.”

“Ok,” Chuck replied, “M203 practice will be day after tomorrow.”

“Why not this afternoon?” Jerry asked, “We might find something else to do the day after tomorrow.”

“Suits me,” Chuck said, “Pass the word for everyone to assemble at the range at 14:00.”

Susan fixed a light lunch for the two of them and around 1:30pm, they made their way to the range. Chuck sat down the box of practice rounds and went to the cache to retrieve a second box. He brought back an M79 launcher and an M72 as well. When everyone was assembled, he demonstrated the proper handling procedures for the M79 and the M203. He had attached a quadrant sight to the M16A2 carrying handle, which was used when precision was required out to the maximum effective range of the weapon, 400 yards.

Holding up the M203 equipped M16A2, Chuck explained, “The M16A2 plus the M203 replaced this,” holding up the M79. “I have mounted M203s on each of my M16A2s. There are 12 more in the weapons cache. They use the same round, but the primary advantage is, in my opinion, that for a few more pounds of weight, you have the best of both worlds. Those of you issued an M16A2 from the cache already have the M203 attached. Allow me to demonstrate.”

Chuck loaded a round into the M203 and slid the launcher closed. He flipped up the sight, gripped the magazine of the rifle and squeezed the trigger on the M203. The round lobbed itself to the barrel that was being used as a target and detonated at the base. As each individual came up to practice firing, he showed him or her how to adjust the front sight for the various ranges and how to hold the rifle. Everyone came close enough to the barrel for government work. Chuck then picked up an M72 LAW rocket and held it aloft.

“This is the M72 LAW rocket. LAW stands for Light Anti-tank Weapon. It fires a 66mm rocket and is a single use device. The military has replaced this with the M136 AT-4 rocket. The advantage to the M72 is the weight, it weighs about 5 pounds and the M136 weighs about 15 pounds. However, the M136 has a greater range and an 84mm projectile. I mention the M136 only as a matter of reference. I don’t have any, although I wished that I did. The effective range of the M72 is about 500 feet. It will punch through light armor like a Humvee. I will demonstrate how to extend the M72, but due to our limited supply, we won’t be firing it.”

Chuck went through the motions of extending the tube to its full length and demonstrated firing procedures, stopping short of actually firing the weapon. In addition to Terry, 3 of the gun shop employees had prior military service in the Army. Chuck had been afforded the opportunity to fire the M72 while TDY with the Corps down at Pendleton. That gave them 3 LAW rockets per man. He hoped that they never had the opportunity to fire the rockets. If they did, it meant that they were in deep crap.

After the demonstrations and practice session, the group moved to the cache and Chuck issued 4 M406 40mm High-explosive rounds and 2 M680 40mm White smoke canopy rounds to each person with a M203. He also issued 4 the M-61 grenades and 2 AN-M8 HC White smoke hand grenades to each person. He repeated his demonstrations concerning the use of the hand grenades for the benefit of the majority who hadn't arrived at The Ranch when he first gave the demonstration.

"Make danged good and sure that you keep your weapons and these explosives secure," Chuck explained, "The last thing any of us needs to do is bury a child who got his or her hands on a grenade. Frankly, I hate to issue this stuff now, but we might not have time to issue it if something happens. So far we have been lucky. Only one group has found this ranch and threatened it. It's been over 3 months since the terrorist attack. Let's pray that our luck holds."

The demonstration got the people's attention. Many of them carried the grenades gingerly, almost as if the grenade could bite them. Someone dropped one of the M-61's on the way back to his trailer. He dove for the dirt and covered his head. Chuck burst out laughing and Susan poked him in the ribs.

"I can't help it sweetheart," Chuck apologized, "Did you see him dive for cover? If the grenade had been live, he'd be dead. As it is, his wife will probably have extra laundry to do."

"Chuck, you've got to give us civilians some slack," Susan said, "Most of us have only seen a hand grenade in the movies. And here you go issuing 6 grenades to every adult and six 40mm grenade rounds to most of them. Besides, do you really think we're going to get into an all out firefight?"

"Susan, I hope not," Chuck confessed, "And if we do, it's just as likely to be with the ATF as it is with some bad guys. I told everyone that the ATF wouldn't be back, but that was before Clinton issued the order to surrender all firearms. They KNOW we have weapons. It's just a good thing that they don't know the extent of our weapons. If they show up again, I am truly afraid that it will result in a firefight. I pray to God that I am wrong."

"Somehow," Susan thought, "I doubt that you are. You are batting close to 1000 at the moment."

The next morning, they set the generators on the slab and erected an un-insulated shed around them to protect them from the elements. The generators were synchronized using the built in control panels. The transfer switch was mounted in the shed with the generators. The shed had been erected right next to the diesel tanker and a fuel line was rigged from the full tanker to the generators. They had the power wired into the grid in short order. With that final act, The Ranch became a temporarily self-sufficient enclave. They had 24/7 power, water and food. They were better equipped than the average infantry unit. And what they lacked in strength of numbers, they made up for by sheer determination.

As Chuck and Susan ate lunch, he absently turned on the radio which was turned to the ABC affiliate in Flagstaff. They had tuned in mid broadcast as the announcer listed communities where FEMA and military forces had routed out groups of militant survivalist's. The effort resulted directly from the assignation of Vice-President Gore and the attempted assignation of President Clinton. Outraged and indignant at the attempt on his life, the President had ordered the round up and imprisonment of 'anyone who even looked like they owned a gun'.

In an unprecedented move, Clinton had nominated the Representative from the state of New York, the honorable Chuck Schumer, to fill the vacant office of Vice President under the provisions of the 25th Amendment. Chuck had his cup to his mouth taking a drink of coffee when he heard that bit of news. He spewed coffee all over the kitchen and nearly choked.

Chuck was still choking when someone knocked on the door. It was Terry and Jerry, or Heckle and Jeckle as Chuck had come to think of them. He waved them in as he finished his coughing jag.

"I was going to ask if you had heard the news," Terry said, "But it appears that you have."

Chuck still couldn't talk, so he nodded his head. Susan poured the men a cup of coffee.

"I'd bet that the ATF shows up again," Terry said.

"I was just saying the same thing to Susan before the radio broadcast," Chuck managed to get out."

"One of you guys want to fill me in?" Jerry asked.

Chuck recounted the ATF inspection, the ruse he'd used to back them down and the part the deputy from Pinal County played in the event. He went on to say that since the ATF knew that they had weapons, he expected them to reappear at any moment. And, he seriously doubted that they would bother to involve the Pinal County Sheriff's office this time. What it boiled down to was fight or flight. A month ago, he wouldn't have given it a thought; he'd fight. Now that he was a married man with responsibilities, he was unsure of what to do.

"Just one minute," Susan declared, "You will do exactly what you would have done. I married you to share your life, for better or worse, not to emasculate you."

"So we fight," Chuck said. "But let's not make it easy for them."

"What do you have in mind?" Terry asked.

"When they were here, there were only two trailers, Jose's and yours," Chuck explained. "Now what if we picked up some more of those deluxe RV's in Mesa to replace your homes and buried everything that wasn't here when they came?"

"Whoa, back up, you lost me at the last turn," Terry said.

"You know that ledge where we put in the unloading dock, right?" Chuck began.

"Yeah, go on."

"What if we excavated an area large enough to hold 8 homes?" Chuck asked.

"And then what?" Terry was getting interested.

"We build a roof framework and fill the dirt back in on the roof," Chuck continued.

"Well, for one thing, you wouldn't know they were there..." Terry slapped his head to re-activate his brain. "I get it, except for the PV panels and the generator shed and the battery shed..."

"The ranch would look just like before," Chuck completed Terry's sentence.

"I'll give you this much," Jerry laughed, "You're one sneaky SOB."

"Oh, it gets better," Chuck went on, "The military has an explosive setup called the M300 Fighting Position Excavator. The official name of the FPE is the Demolition Kit, Blasting, Fighting Position Excavator: M300. It consists of an auger and two binary demolition charges that are inert until ready to deploy.

"The target area is prepared by using the auger to create two pilot holes about 42" apart and 42" deep. The two demolition charges are placed in the ground and detonated to loosen the soil. I think that we can duplicate an FPE with a posthole auger and a C-4 charge. The FPE creates a 2 man-fighting hole. We can use the C-4 to create several 1 person fighting holes. With a little work, we can fabricate covers for them and completely camouflage them."

"What good is that going to do?" Terry asked, "If they come busting in like last time, we won't be any better off."

"If we had one of those chairs like lifeguards used to sit in, you know, about 10' high," Chuck began.

"We could see them coming for 5 or 6 miles," Terry was grinning.

"And ambush them good," Jerry said.

“We’re leaving for Mesa right now,” Terry said, “You best have a lot accomplished by the time we get back.”

Chuck got people running both posthole diggers while he retrieved a box of C-4, some det cord and detonators from the cache. It took the two men nearly 3 hours to put in all of the holes Chuck wanted. He laid out the det cord, making a 4’ loop at every hole and wrapping the det cord with a block of C-4. He lowered the charges into the holes and someone else shoveled the dirt back in.

When the last charge was in, Chuck activated the 15-second delay detonator and stood well back. The blast broke loose about 80% of the soil they had to move. Heckle and Jeckle arrived back at The Ranch just as they began to move the earth with the front-end loader.

The group was seized by a sense of urgency and worked through the night. By dawn, they were ready to erect the roof framework and move the mobile housing. While the earth was being removed with the front-end loader, they fabricated most of the framework and laid it aside. As fast as postholes could be dug, the prefabricated framework sections were dropped into the holes and compacted into place.

At 10am, they were laying plywood sheeting and by noon, the sheeting was covered with earth. Given 24 hours, the sun would bake the soil and no one would suspect that a housing tract lay under the soil. All the while they were constructing the roof, the backhoe was digging a new trench for utilities. Had The Ranch been perfectly flat, they might have been in trouble. Once again fortune smiled on them and they had a 3’ drop to the septic tank inlets.

While one crew ran the utilities, a second crew replanted some of the plants that had been in the roof area before the madcap project had begun. The women were working shoulder to shoulder with their husbands; a teenager was watching the younger children. A third crew consisting of Terry and the 3 vets from the gun shop dug postholes for fighting positions. Chuck followed behind them placing a C-4 wrapped loop of det cord in each hole.

Almost 24 hours after they had first fomented the plan, Chuck activated another 15-second delay detonator and the fighting positions were opened. Meanwhile, the women took rakes and brooms and eradicated most of the evidence of the RV’s and trailers former parking places. Finally, they sat the crudely constructed ‘lifeguard’ chair on the roof of the house and flipped coins to see who would get stuck with the first shift of guard duty in the chair. Terry lost the toss and air horn in hand, mounted the chair for his 4-hour tour of duty.

Every one else either went directly to bed or had a cold drink and went to bed.

Chuck and Susan decided to have a cold one before retiring.

"You're a maniac," Chuck said to Susan, "I could barely keep up with you."

"Just pray that they don't show up in the next 24 hours," Susan replied, "I don't think anyone has enough energy to lift a gun."

They finished the beers, and crawled in bed, Chuck cuddling Susan in his arms. They were sleeping in seconds and awoke just as night fell. While Susan took a shower, Chuck stumbled to the kitchen and put together a pot of coffee. When she came to the kitchen, he left to take his shower. After he had cleaned up, they had a sandwich and went out to the front porch to enjoy the cool of the evening. They immediately noticed a group of people in the barn hammering and sawing. They walked to the barn.

"What's going on?" Chuck asked.

"We're building the fighting hole covers," Terry replied.

Chuck examined a finished cover. It was a simple 30" square constructed from 2x4's with a sheet of 1/4" plywood mounted in the center and attached on one side by two hinges and resting on a stop on the other side. While Lynn held a bush to the center of the trap door Jerry's wife Helen stapled the roots to the plywood. It was crude, but effective. Jerry and Terry's children painted on Elmer's glue and tossed sand and small pebbles on the glue. They were done constructing the fighting hole covers in a couple of hours. They decided to wait until dawn to set the covers in place.

"If everyone wants to join Susan and me for a cold drink," Chuck suggested, "we can talk about how this plan is going to work."

Everyone was rested except for Terry who had only gotten 3 hours of sleep. He took iced tea with the kids; the adults all took a cold beer.

"Look," Chuck said, "We should have anywhere from 5 to 10 minutes notice of anyone showing up. We can increase that by 3 or 4 minutes if we park a pickup across the gate. That should give us plenty of time to get into place. Let's put our best shots in the fighting holes. At the first sign of trouble, a single blast on the air horn will warn everyone to get into position.

"When the moment is right to attack, a second blast on the air horn will signal everyone to pop up and fire on the nearest target. I believe that they are going to be so over confident that we will have them at a distinct disadvantage. When they pull in and don't see any particular evidence that we are a large group, they will feel even more arrogant. I will complicate matters by wearing my Deputy's uniform from now on. With any luck, they won't know what hit them."

"Aren't you making yourself a target," Susan asked.

"I don't think so," Chuck explained, "Until they get close, they won't know who I am. As

they enter the property, I'll pretend not to notice them and step into the house. When they pile out of their vehicles, I let loose the second blast on the horn. Now does anyone have any suggestions or questions?"

"Only one," Jerry replied, "Assuming we're successful, what then?"

"I think we have two choices," Chuck replied. "Either we risk moving the bodies and vehicles to a different location; or, we dig a big hole and bury them, vehicles and all. That could have risks, too. If push came to shove, they could probably locate the bodies with cadaver dogs. And, if they don't come back with our guns, and us, there will no doubt be a follow-up group paying us a visit, either way we go."

"If we pre-dig the hole, that option should be faster and a whole lot safer," Terry suggested.

"I agree," Chuck said, "But it's all up to the group to decide."

"Remember that you said that you got the idea for the cache from *Terminator 2*?" Terry asked.

"Yeah, but what does that have to do with this discussion?" Chuck asked.

"I remember seeing an old western movie on TV," Terry explained. "The Indians buried their dead chief and then rode their horses over the grave, packing the soil and eliminating all signs of the grave."

"I don't see your point." Chuck admitted.

Well, we do have 19 head of cattle, 2 sows and 4 horses." Terry replied, "We could herd the livestock back and forth over the grave site a few times and then set a water tank nearby. The cattle would continue to walk over the grave site to get water and in a few days, there would be no sign whatsoever."

"Aw hell," Chuck said, "There goes my reputation for being devious and clever. Now I have competition."

"Yeah, but that only worked in the movies," Terry confessed, "I don't know if it will work in real life."

"Why wouldn't it?" Susan asked, "Those cattle are bound to leave some manure in the area, which might even throw cadaver dogs off."

"Well that would mean that we'd have to form some type of cover for the front side of the buried housing tract," Chuck explained.

"Do we have any shortage of lumber and plywood?" Susan asked.

“No,” Terry offered.

“Well,” Susan suggested, “Then while one crew puts the covers over the fighting holes, one person can use the backhoe to dig the pit and the rest of you can build a lightweight wood cover for the front of the housing tract as you call it.” We’ll all help and if we run out of glue we’ll mix sand and some tint into some of those cans of paint and paint the sand on.

“Just nail on some short random length slats at random intervals and angles so we can pile some dirt on the slats. And, simply lean the large cammo panel against the top of the wood roof frame so it matches the natural angle of the rest of the ledge. If we have to pull out in a hurry for whatever reason, all we’ll have to do is push over the cover.”

“Chuck, I hate to tell you this, but you’re in trouble buddy,” Jerry laughed.

“Oh?” Chuck inquired.

“Yep. Your new wife is at least as clever as you are,” Jerry continued to laugh.

The group broke up and set their alarms for about ½ hour before dawn before retiring. They planned to get an early start in the morning. If their luck held for one more day, they would be totally ready for the arrival of the feds. In hindsight they need not have rushed as they had.

The feds put a higher priority on rounding up that bunch of armed rebels at the dairy farm because it was closer to Phoenix. It wasn’t until a third contingent of feds showed up backed by the Army that the feds succeeded in over running the dairy farm. Of course those folks hadn’t bothered to dispose of the bodies and were unable to deny that the feds had been there.

al-Qaida – Chapter 8 – ATF, round 2

The next morning, Chuck dressed in his uniform and Susan and he joined the group already hard at work. The backhoe was digging a pit in front of the livestock water tank. The fighting-hole covers were mostly in place; only 4 remained to be installed. Unless one was right on top of them, they were all but invisible.

“I think that we had better put a stake with a flag next to the fighting-holes,” Susan suggested, “Otherwise, we may end up looking for them ourselves.”

“Ok,” Chuck agreed.

“Hey boss,” Jerry approached, “We have a problem with the housing tract. I noticed this morning that fumes were accumulating from the hot water heaters. We’re going to have to do something to vent that whole area.”

“How many 20” box fans do we have left?” Chuck asked.

“Six,” Jerry replied.

“Why don’t we put 3 on the west end of the tract near the roof and use them to pull air into the area?” Chuck suggested, “Mount the other three on the east end of the tract and use them to exhaust air from the area? Set all of the switches on the ‘high’ position. If that doesn’t move enough air, we’ll add more fans.”

“Why not put all 6 on the east end to exhaust the air?” Jerry suggested. “We can put in a couple of inlets on the west end. We can space out the exhaust fans and leave room for more if they are needed.”

“Why don’t you compromise?” Susan asked. “Put in 4 intake frames and 4 exhaust frames, each large enough to hold 3 fans. You can start with 6 exhaust fans and the next time we’re in the Junction or Mesa, we can pick up 18 more fans. You can plant a bush next to each intake/outlet pipe to conceal the vents.”

“Chuck,” Jerry laughed, “I think I’ll quit asking you and go straight to the top from now on.”

Chuck had to admit that Susan’s idea was better than his. Who could be certain how many fans it would take to properly exhaust the gases. Besides, if they put in all of the inlets and exhausts now, it would be a simple matter to add more fans as needed. At least Susan wasn’t pushy. She listened to everyone and combined each person’s ideas into a better solution; and, she did so in a non-threatening manner making certain to acknowledge the sources of her proposed solutions.

Jerry found a length of the 10” flexible ducting used to route air in the attics of homes. He stretched it out and cut it into 8 equal length pieces. While the carpenter types built

the boxes to hold the fans, he installed the intake and vent ducts, adding a piece of fiberglass screen material to each duct. Helen and Lynn planted a bush by each vent as he finished. When the project was done, the air quality in the tract had noticeably improved. The backhoe had a pit large enough to hold 2 vans and was working to expand it to hold more.

Chuck and Susan were taking a close look at the vents. If you didn't know where they were, you couldn't see them. In fact even if you knew where they were, you couldn't see them unless you looked under the bush planted to hide them. Not bad for a bunch of amateurs who got most of their ideas from watching old movies.

Susan, Chuck noticed, was looking at him strangely. "What's the matter Susan?" he asked.

"Did you change something on your uniform?" she asked.

"Just the shoulder patch, why?" he said.

"It just looked different," Susan replied.

"I replaced the Sheriff's Reserve patch with a regular active duty patch," Chuck admitted. "It betters the illusion."

Shortly after the encounter with the AFT at Chuck's ranch, the Pinal County Sheriff had called all Reserve Sheriff's to full active duty. They hadn't had time to notify each and every Reserve Officer, Chuck being a prime example. If Chuck had just turned on the portable radio on his belt, he would have known that his patch ruse merely put him in correct uniform.

Of course, the Sheriff had made a point of notifying the ATF that Reserve deputy Charles Tunis was now an active duty Sheriff's deputy and as such was entitled to have the weapons in his possession. When the ATF Agent, Thompson, received the written notice from the Pinal County Sheriff, he put it through his shredder. By God that hick was going to pay for embarrassing him!

After they had killed off or imprisoned the dairy farm group, Thompson set his sights on Mr. Charles Tunis. The owner of the gun store had turned up in the relocation center and under questioning denied that he had Tunis's Class III weapons on consignment. Strike one. Tunis turned out to be a Reserve deputy for the Pinal County Sheriff and that deputy had probably lied to protect him. Strike two. Tunis was a little too arrogant and demanding to suit Thompson and that smart remark about the Colt revolvers was just plain insulting. Strike three.

And, there were only nine people at The Ranch; a force of sixteen AFT agents would be more than enough to handle that small group. They would leave before dawn the next morning, arriving while the nine people were sleeping. Thompson searched his memory.

The Mexican and his wife and daughter lived in the larger trailer and that gun dealer from Mesa lived in the smaller trailer with his wife and 2 children. That just left Tunis and the sister-in-law in the house. Probably sleeping together, he mused.

While Thompson was planning the raid, those at The Ranch finished digging the pit for the ATF vehicles. As a measure of added insurance, they made the pit large enough to hold 4 vehicles. The cover had been thrown together and everyone had worked to disguise it. It wouldn't pass a close inspection, but from 20' or more away, it looked like part of the ledge. They scattered dirt and raked to hide the tire marks the vehicles made when they were backed into the tract. A few bushes were planted and the tract was essentially hidden from view.

A faint odor lingered, they would have to add more fans. That night, they held a cook-out/barbeque to avoid using the stoves in the tract homes. Chuck and Susan had dug out two large packages of steaks and a package of hamburgers. Forewarned, the bakers made enough hamburger buns during the daily baking to let the kids have 'real' hamburgers.

"I don't know what else we can do to make this place more secure," Jerry said shoveling a large bite of steak into his mouth.

"Neither do I," Chuck agreed. "I expect they'll hit us around first light sometime in the next week. Tell everyone to avoid using the grenades, if possible. We don't know how fast a backup force will arrive and I don't want pieces of AFT vans littering the place. I've decided to only signal the attack if they give me any trouble. Of course if that agent Thompson is with them, we're going to have to take out the whole bunch. Otherwise, I'll try to bluff it out one more time."

"It doesn't much matter," Jerry said, "We're ready, either way."

The next morning, agent Thompson gathered his force of agents and they departed a few minutes later than planned. They were still running with their headlights on five miles north of The Ranch as the sky lightened revealing the beginning of the new day. Chuck was pulling his shift on guard duty and spotted the headlights in the distance. He let loose with a long blast on the air horn, signaling everyone to take their battle stations.

As people scampered from the tract to assume their positions, the AFT vans, 4 of them, pulled to a stop at the front gate. Chuck slipped down from his perch and stood at the front of his home. Susan was already in her fighting hole covering him with her Remington target rifle. The pickup across the gate slowed the AFT agents down just enough to allow the last person to close the lid on her fighting hole.

The vans rushed to the house and the agents piled out, weapons at the ready. When Chuck spotted Thompson, he stepped back into the house letting loose the second blast from the air horn. Upon hearing the sound of the air horn, the ATF agents, most

hardened by dozens of encounters with other patriot groups, crouched and aimed their MP5's in a circular pattern pointing away from the house.

Their move was precise, but too late as the residents selected their targets and fired mostly headshots at the less than 50-yard ranges. Chuck had the personal pleasure of adjusting agent Thompson's attitude, permanently. Although they had planned to bury the agents with their vehicles and weapons, Chuck decided that the weapons and ammo would find a new home in the cache. The agents had come loaded for bear and 4 M136-AT4 rockets also found a new home in the cache.

They loaded the stripped bodies into the vans and drove them to the pit. Susan and the women cleaned up as much of the blood as they could, covering the remainder with sand and dirt. Before the 4 vans were lowered into the pit, there was no sign that the agents had been at The Ranch. Susan drove up to the gate and moved the pickup back across the gate. She returned to the house to discover her husband sitting on the front porch of their home drinking, of all things, a beer and it wasn't even time yet for breakfast. Chuck had a somewhat dejected look on his face. Susan sat down beside her new husband and asked, "What the matter?"

"I'm not sure, to be honest," Chuck answered, "Look at me all dressed up in my Deputy's uniform. Not 30 minutes ago I gave the signal that caused the deaths of 16 fellow law enforcement officers; even killed one of them myself."

"Oh, did you shoot him, too," she asked.

"Who, Thompson?" he asked Susan.

"Yes, when I saw him raise his gun to shoot you," Susan said, "I put a round in the back of his head."

"That must be why the top of his head came completely off," Chuck responded, "I put one right between his eyes."

A pickup load of men pulled up to the house. Jerry dismounted and said, "Hole's filled in and the cattle have been across it a dozen times. You'd never even know that there was a pit there. Anyone on our side get hurt?"

"They never got a shot off," Susan replied.

"Good," Jerry replied, "Got the backhoe working on another pit."

"Sure hope we don't have to use it," Chuck said softly.

"What's the matter with him?" Jerry asked Susan.

"I think that Chuck is on a guilt trip," Susan answered Jerry.

"I sure as hell don't know why!" Jerry said and stormed off.

Susan knew from past experience that Chuck was going to have to come to terms with whatever was bothering him in his own time. She gave him a peck on the cheek and said, "I'm here if you need me," and entered the house.

Chuck wasn't sure just what he was feeling. It was the first time that he had ever killed anyone. But that wasn't it; he was sure that Thompson was as corrupt as a governmental employee could be. The SOB got what was coming to him. Thompson wasn't wearing a wedding ring; he was probably married to his job.

He came to realize that he felt sorry for the widows and orphans of the other 15 ATF agents who had been killed. "Oh well," he thought, "No one made them be ATF agents; they could have quit when Clinton started shredding the Constitution. He was still sitting on the front porch when the air horn blew again. He rushed to the roof and saw two Pinal County Sheriff's vehicles and 2 ATF vehicles at the front gate.

Chuck waited in front of the house holding the air horn. Everyone had made it to his or her fighting holes twice as fast as earlier in the day. The cars pulled in and his training instructor friend got out of the first car.

"I see you got the word," his friend said.

"What word?" Chuck asked.

"That all Reserve Deputy's were on active duty," was the reply.

"Uh, no," Chuck stammered, "I didn't know that.

"You would if you ever turned on that radio on your belt," he was advised.

Chuck sat the air horn on the ground. He sheepishly admitted, "It never occurred to me, Bill."

"Anyway these ATF boys are looking for your pal Thompson and a detachment of ATF troops," Bill explained. "They were on their way here to raid your ranch. Seen them?"

"Nope, and I've been up since dawn." Chuck lied.

I see that you have a rather large PV array," Bill noted, "And a couple of new buildings, too. And a Chevron tanker and new water tanks. That's a lot of stuff for just 9 people. How many people are there here really?"

"Thirty-three," Chuck admitted. "Bill, you've met my wife Susan haven't you?"

“Wife?” Bill almost choked, “I thought that you were a confirmed bachelor. Congratulations Susan, you must be one hell of a gal to have nabbed this reprobate.”

“Thanks, I think,” Susan laughed.

“All clear people,” Chuck shouted.

The bushes began to flip over as the residents emerged from their fighting holes. The ATF boys went on instant alert and looked longingly at the various assault rifles and MBR’s.

“How many adults in total, besides yourself?” Bill asked.

“Seventeen,” Chuck replied, “Why?”

“Have them all assemble here,” Bill insisted.

When the adults were assembled, Bill said, “Raise your right hands and repeat after me...”

When the oath had been administered, Bill, the chief deputy of Pinal County, said, “All right folks you are all deputized members of the Sheriff’s Reserve and temporarily on active duty. Chuck is in charge of your group. I have some badges in the car; everyone be sure to get one before we leave.

Bill turned to the ATF leader, “Well, deputy Tunis says that your people never made it here. I’d suggest that you backtrack to Phoenix and look for the bodies. They probably ran up against a bunch of American Patriots who were sick and tired of the Government’s abuses and took them out like that bunch in Alabama.”

The chief deputy waited until the ATF people left. While he was waiting, he nudged some sand aside and spotted a seemingly fresh bloodstain.

“I only have one piece of advice for you Chuck,” Bill grinned, “Make sure those bodies are buried deep. Come over to the car, I have a 25 watt radio and an antenna for you. From now on deputy, you check in with the office every 8 hours.”

Chuck just shrugged his shoulders at Bill’s remark. He followed Bill over to the car and accepted the 25-watt mobile radio, an antenna and a power supply. Bill began handing out deputy sheriff’s badges to the adults. When he gave Susan her badge, he also handed her a large bundle of the cable ties cops use as temporary handcuffs.

“Those are for the event that Chuck gives you any trouble,” he winked.

“Oh I can handle him,” Susan laughed.

"I have no doubt Susan," Bill laughed, too, "No doubt at all. When Chuck settles down a little, tell him that Thompson had written notice of Chuck being an active duty deputy, signed for the certified letter personally. He was down here on a personal vendetta. The Sheriff told those ATF boys that if that happened one more time he'd line them up and shoot them personally. I think that you folks have seen the last of the ATF."

"I hope so," Susan said.

"Just in case, I'd move those fighting holes to new locations," Bill suggested as he climbed into the car. "I'll see you folks about once a week from now on."

The Deputy's turned their cars around and left. Susan quickly related what Bill had told her about Thompson to her husband. His mood seemed to brighten immediately. She also passed on the advice about moving the fighting holes. Chuck shared that tidbit with Terry and Jerry and they said that they would get right on it. Having watched Chuck prepare the C-4 charges for the fighting holes, they assured him that they could handle the matter by themselves.

Chuck mounted the antenna on a 10' length of 1¼" galvanized water pipe and augured the pipe into the roof of the house, the highest spot on The Ranch. He ran the antenna wire over the front of the roof and through a corner of the screen door, which he notched to clear the cable. He sat the radio up, connected the power supply and antenna leads and reported in to the Sheriff's dispatch.

The dispatcher had quite a bit of radio traffic for him including instructions from the Sheriff. He was also advised that the Sheriff of Maricopa County agreed to back the Pinal County Sheriff in his campaign against the ATF. The jurisdictional authority of Deputy's from both Counties was reciprocal. He and the residents of The Ranch were now recognized as Deputy's of both Counties. He was advised to keep the radio on and report in every 8 hours.

"Hey Jerry," Chuck yelled.

"What's up boss," Jerry asked.

"Fill in the new pit, we won't need it," Chuck directed, "And get everyone's hat size."

"Huh?" Jerry asked. "Everyone's what?"

"Hat size," Susan repeated, suspecting what Chuck had in mind.

Jerry directed that the pit be refilled. That garnered a groan from the fella who had spent hours digging it. He dutifully got everyone's hat size, or used a cloth tape measure he borrowed from Helen to measure their heads. When he had the information Chuck requested, he gave it to Chuck.

“You, Terry and Jose, get in a pickup with a trailer and follow us,” Chuck directed as he and Susan got into his Dodge.

He led them to the Junction where they picked up 2-dozen 20” box fans. He then drove them to a western store and they all went inside. “Take the Wranglers and western shirts and put them in your truck.”

Susan handed him several hatboxes. He looked at the label, smiled and carried them to his Dodge. They nearly emptied the store and Chuck’s final grab was the tooled western belts and a box of 3-dozen tourist belt buckles with a deputy sheriff’s badge on the buckle. The final stop was a bootery where they loaded up on Tony Lama boots. By the time they finished, both trucks and the trailer were full. Chuck led them back to The Ranch and assembled the residents.

“All of you know how much I am into movies by now,” Chuck began to explain his actions. “We have a unique opportunity to help the people in this area. A Reciprocity Agreement has been reached between the Sheriffs of Pinal and Maricopa Counties. You are now recognized Deputy’s of both counties and should govern yourselves accordingly. Since we can’t provide uniforms for everyone, I did the next best thing, in my opinion. Our uniform will be blue jeans, matching western shirts, boots and white hats. I figured what the hell; the good guys always wear white hats!”

When the laughter died down, Chuck resumed his speech, “Seriously, Since I’m not an Arizona native, I don’t know what the old Arizona Rangers wore; but I know that the Texas Rangers pretty much dress alike and they all wear white Stetsons. So, I borrowed a page from that book. There should be enough of every size and color for everyone in the clothing.

“I picked up some tourist knockoff belt buckles and some really nice Tony Lama boots. Please outfit yourselves from the goods on the trucks and in the trailer. Susan or I will post a list of the Uniform of the Day later this evening. Tomorrow, please wear a white shirt. I would appreciate it if Jerry, Terry and their wives would join Susan and me after the meeting. Thank you.”

Susan laughed at Chuck’s remarks in spite of herself. She knew she was going to hear that Good Guys Wear White Hats Line. Chuck was right in a way; his move would add cohesiveness to the group. The old Arizona Rangers existed in various forms from 1860 to 1909. In 1957, a group of volunteers calling themselves the Arizona Rangers was formed dedicated to assisting law enforcement offices throughout the state and donate generously to some very worthy causes.

She wondered if Chuck had seen reruns of the old TV show called *26 Men* which ran during the late 1950’s. Anyway, there were only 18 adults in the group, half women. Somehow *18 Persons* didn’t have the ring of *26 Men*. The meeting broke up and Susan walked arm in arm back to the house with Chuck.

“Ok Roy Rogers,” Jerry laughed, “We’re all going to dress up like good little cowboys and cowgirls and save the west, huh?”

“Sort of, yes,” Chuck grinned. “You don’t really believe that the danged Feds are going to back down just because two county sheriff’s threatened them do you?”

“I suppose not,” Jerry acknowledged more seriously.

“We have full legal authority in two counties,” Chuck explained. “I propose that we keep an eye on them instead of the other way around.”

“And do WHAT?” Terry jumped in.

“Just what we did today,” Chuck replied evenly.

“What, we’re going to be a group of vigilantes stopping the feds from beating up on the people?” Terry replied incredulously.

“In a word, yes,” Chuck responded.

“Can I have some of what you’ve been drinking or smoking?” Terry snapped.

“Knock it off Terry,” Jerry interrupted. “I sort of like the idea.”

“The gist of it is that the Pinal County Sheriff will supply us with radios, for as many vehicles as we have, which will operate on the frequencies assigned to both counties,” Chuck explained. “One of the messages I got was very specific to my way of thinking. It said good show, keep it up; instructions to follow. I’d bet that Bill no sooner cleared our driveway than he was telling the Sheriff what happened here today. The time stamp on that message was after Bill left The Ranch.”

“We’re going to look awful silly running around a bunch of old pickups,” Terry commented.

“Actually, I was thinking Bronco or Tahoe,” Chuck suggested. “Why don’t we all pile in one pickup tomorrow and have Susan drive us to Phoenix. We can bring back 9 new Tahoes. Then we can run them down to Florence and have the Sheriff install the radios in them.”

“Let’s do it,” Jerry replied.

“Sheesh!” was all that Terry could manage.

al-Qaida – Chapter 9 – 26 Men

*This is the story of 26 men who rode the Arizona territory...
26 men who lived to ride again rode out to answer duty's call;
26 men who lived to fight again rode out for the right and the liberty of all.*

As she drove the men to Phoenix, Susan recalled the theme song to the old TV show.

She'd only seen it in reruns; it was off the air before she was born. Somehow Chuck's idea had some appeal. She hoped that he realized just how risky his plan was. She pulled into a Chevrolet dealer and the men piled out of the truck. After considerable discussion, they selected 9 white Tahoes and broke into the dealership to locate the keys. They added 2 gallons of gasoline to each Tahoe and the ten vehicles set out for The Ranch.

"White Tahoes," she thought, "Probably to match their white hats."

When they arrived at The Ranch, they lined the Tahoes up in a row. Impressive. Susan got out of the Dodge to overhear a loud discussion between Jerry and Terry.

"Well, then, we'll just have to drive back to Mesa and see if we can find some gasoline," Jerry was telling Terry.

"Knock it off, you two," Chuck snapped.

"Problem fellas?" Susan asked.

"I'll settle it, we'll just ask the boss," Jerry said.

He turned to Susan and said, "Susan, Terry is complaining because we got gasoline vehicles instead of diesels. I told him that we'd just have to drive back to Mesa and see if we could find some gasoline. What do you think?"

Susan looked at Chuck who smiled and nodded. "Well...Terry, does Chevy make a diesel Tahoe?" she asked.

"I don't know, probably not," Terry admitted. (They do.)

"And you went along with getting the Tahoes, right?" she continued.

"Yeah, but..." Terry replied.

"Then, I guess you two are just going to have to find some gasoline, aren't you?" Susan concluded.

"Has anyone seen any gasoline tankers around the Mesa area?" Chuck asked loudly.

“There was a tanker sitting at one of the discount stations,” someone offered, “But I don’t know if it was empty or full or whether it had gas or diesel.”

“Why don’t you and Jerry go check it out?” Chuck suggested. “Terry, why don’t you install the rest of the fans in the tract?”

Susan and Chuck went into the house.

“I’m sorry Chuck,” Susan said, “Jerry is carrying that boss thing a little too far.”

“It’s just his sense of humor Susan,” Chuck replied, “Besides you said exactly what I would have said. If it bothers you, I’ll have a word with him.”

“It doesn’t bother me at all,” she said, “But it might confuse some of the others, like Jose for example.”

“Speaking of Jose,” Chuck said changing the subject, “I haven’t seen a lot of him, are Maria and he having a problem?”

“No,” She laughed, “Jose has been up nights walking Teresa. She’s cutting her first tooth.”

“That’s good to hear,” Chuck smiled, “Now, explain to me what is going on between Heckle and Jeckle.”

“I’m not sure,” Susan said, “I suspect that since Terry got here first that he sort of assumed that he was your second in command. Then Jerry showed up and started acting like he was second in command.

“As far as I am concerned,” Chuck said, “If anyone is second in command, it is you.”

“Don’t let them hear you say that,” Susan cautioned, “The best solution is to make them both second in command.”

“How do you propose I do that?” Chuck asked mystified.

“Set up two units and place each one in charge of a unit,” Susan suggested. “That will make them equals and should end the argument.”

“And when we do an operation with both units...” Chuck said.

“I’ll be your second in command,” Susan replied.

A blast from a diesel air horn interrupted their conversation. Jerry was driving a tractor pulling a double bottom delivery truck.

“It was gas,” Jerry announced. “I sent Don over to an auto parts store to see if he could find some PRI-D and some PRI-G. We’re going to have to stabilize the fuel if we want it to last.”

Terry was walking back to the house from the tract.

“Jerry and Terry would you two yard birds join Susan and me in the house?” Chuck asked.

Chuck got everyone a beer. “Alright you two, we’re going to set up two units of 8 persons in each unit. Each of you will be in charge of one unit. Susan will be my second in command and either one of you can talk to either one of us about any problems you might need help with. Do you have any ideas what your might want to call your units?”

“How about Heckle?” Jerry said.

“And Jeckle?” Terry added.

Everyone had a good laugh. Obviously you couldn’t even pee around this place without someone hearing the water run. Chuck told them that Susan and he would drive down to Florence tomorrow and get their Tahoe outfitted by the Sheriff’s Department. The two men could flip a coin to see who went the day after. He suggested that Terry take Jose and Maria into his group. Two couples from the gun shop could also join Terry’s group, it was up to the two men to work out whom.

Chuck also brought up the subject of how each vehicle was to be armed; he suggested a standard police shotgun rack be installed and a 3 gun rack be installed on the back of the front seat. Since all of the MP5’s seized from the ATF were suppressed, each vehicle ought to have a pair of MP5’s. He was certain, he said, that the Sheriff could supply Susan and him with MP-5’s and if he couldn’t, they would have enough after their next encounter with the ATF.

“You are absolutely serious about taking on the ATF, aren’t you,” Terry said.

“Can you think of a better way to help people in the area who are just trying to get along?” Chuck asked.

“I guess not,” Terry conceded.

“Well then yes, I’m serious,” Chuck acknowledged.

They filled all of the Tahoes fuel tanks and added the Pri-D to the diesel fuel and the Pri-G to the 16,000 gallons of premium gasoline. Chuck made a mental note to get a jerry can and can rack for each Tahoe. Heckle or Jeckle could do that tomorrow; better add a first aid kit, too; and tow straps. Before he was done checking off the odds and

ends they should carry in each vehicle, he had 9 items on his list. He showed the list to Susan and she suggested that they add a case of road flares for each vehicle. She also suggested that they pick up arm patches for their 'uniforms' and have the sheriff's department put decals on the door panels of the Tahoes.

In sorting through the clothing that they had picked up, the women had discovered that there were enough of the heavy white shirts to provide every adult with at least 3. Wouldn't it make more sense, she suggested, just to make the heavy white shirts their uniform shirt? Having to check a posted uniform of the day list was a lot of unnecessary bother and confusing.

The last topic they discussed before retiring was the fact that their settlement was so small. Susan suggested that the group should make it a practice to invite like-minded people to join them at The Ranch. She pointed out that they didn't have enough people to really deal effectively with a large force of ATF agents; and, if all of the adults were off chasing down the ATF who would protect the children?

Some of the new people ought to be farmers, or at least gardeners, or they wouldn't have food to eat in another year; after all, how much more stuff could they 'liberate' from Mesa before there was nothing left to liberate? And, what about some farm equipment to plow the garden?

Chuck finally suggested that everything she was suggesting had merit. Why didn't she make a list and they could start scrounging in a major way, for supplies, equipment and for people? Tomorrow night was soon enough to start, wasn't she ready for bed, please?

Chuck was up at the crack of dawn, feeling like a million bucks. He showered, shaved, etc. and dressed in his clean Pinal County sheriff's uniform. Jerry and Terry were up messing around with the Tahoes. He invited them in for coffee and started to cover as much as he could remember of his previous night's conversation with Susan.

He gave them the list of equipment for the Tahoes and asked them to get as many of the items on the list as possible. Forget that uniform of the day crap, he said, everyone could wear jeans, the heavy white shirts (like the Texas Rangers did), Tony Lama boots and the white hats.

They needed more people, he told them, asking if they knew of any other groups of survivors. They told him they hadn't seen anyone except the military, but they would keep an eye out. Pick up as many of the white Tahoes as they could find while he was in Florence, he said, if they could find the people, they would need the vehicles. Oh yeah, keep an eye out for farm equipment, too.

Susan joined them dressed in her unofficial uniform, the white shirt, jeans, and shiny black Tony Lama boots. Man alive, did she look good in a uniform. She asked to Terry and Jerry where they could get some Sam Browne type rigs. They both came up with

the same answer. A Maricopa County Deputy who had a side business out of his home supplying his fellow law enforcement officers with their equipment at heavily discounted prices. He would probably have everything they needed. But, they pointed out that they had so much to do that day after talking to Chuck that they would have to put that off until later.

Chuck and Susan left for Florence. Terry and Jerry organized the long list of tasks and decided that Lynn could drive the 8 men and Helen to Phoenix to pick up another 9 white Tahoes. The other wives could pull guard duty; they'd more than proven themselves handling those ATF boys.

Two hours later, they were back at The Ranch fueling up the 9 additional Tahoes. They divided into 3 groups of 3, Helen rounding out the group of 8 men. Jerry had to admit that his wife looked pretty damn good in her uniform, too. The hard work over the past two months had burned off any excess body fat that the men and women had, replacing it with muscle, and they all looked very fit. One trio went looking for the gun racks; the other two for the other equipment for the Tahoes. By evening, they were all back with enough equipment for 30 vehicles. They had even found several winches that they could mount on the vehicles.

It hadn't taken Chuck and Susan that long to drive to Florence. While the Sheriff's garage staff worked to install the radios, a light bar and shotgun rack, Chuck introduced his new bride to the Sheriff and they visited about what the group at The Ranch would be doing.

"You understand," Sheriff Vandenberg, told them, "That I can't suggest that you break the law. But, we're spread pretty thin what with this office and 10 substations to cover. You folks are our liaison with the ATF. They have been so heavy handed enforcing Clinton's illegal Executive Orders that Maricopa and Pinal Counties have been hard pressed to protect our citizens. Do what you have to do; but, if I don't need to know something, don't put me or yourselves on the spot."

"Sheriff," Chuck asked, "Susan is wearing what we could come up with for a uniform, do you approve?"

"Looks pretty good to me," Vandenberg replied. "Pick up some shoulder patches on your way out, it will make it look more official."

"Do you know of any other communities like ours here in Pinal County?" Susan asked, "We're a pretty small group and short on a lot of skills."

"There's a group over in Maricopa of about 30 to 40 people, give or take," Vandenberg replied. "They are having a terrible time of it. Chuck, you probably know most of them, why don't you and Susan drive over and talk to them?"

"What kind of a group is it?" Chuck asked.

“Mostly ranch hands and their wives and kids,” Vandenberg answered. “There are some town folk, too. They are a good bunch of people, but they weren’t really prepared for what happened,” Vandenberg explained. “How many vehicles are you going to need me to equip for you?”

“We have 9 Tahoes Sheriff,” Chuck responded, “But Terry and Jerry are supposed to be out looking for more. Anywhere from 15 to 30, I expect.”

“I don’t have enough radios, light bars and equipment for that many, Chuck,” Vandenberg shook his head, “I may have to send some of you up to the Maricopa Sheriff to get your vehicles equipped. I don’t know if he has enough equipment either.”

By the time the protracted conversation ended, the Tahoe was ready. Susan and Chuck made the trek to Maricopa and stopped at the Sheriff’s substation. One of the Deputy’s on duty led them to the group of survivor’s. Vandenberg was right; Chuck did know most of them.

“Hey Chuck,” Randy Quinn, greeted him, “How’s it going and who’s the pretty lady?”

“Randy, meet my wife Susan,” Chuck introduced them, “Susan this is Randy Quinn. Before you ask Randy, we just got married a short time ago. Sheriff Vandenberg says that your group is having a hard time of it, what’s going on?”

“We only had enough supplies for about a month,” Randy explained, “We’ve been hard pressed to come up with more food. We’ve been scrounging for everything we need. How are things with you?”

“There are 9 families at my ranch,” Chuck advised. “We’re in pretty good shape for supplies for now, but there isn’t a farmer or rancher in the bunch. We want to grow our community. What would you say to this group moving up to The Ranch?”

“We’d have to talk it over Chuck,” Randy replied, “But if you have food and can house us I don’t think there would be any resistance. How would I get in touch with you to let you know what we decide?”

“Let the Sheriff’s substation know,” Chuck advised, “They will pass it on to us.”

“We’ll talk it over tonight and I’ll let you know tomorrow,” Randy responded.

“How many families are we talking about?” Susan asked.

“Ten families Susan,” Randy replied, “Ten couples and 18 children.”

“If you decide to come up to The Ranch,” Chuck inquired, “Are you covered for transportation for yourselves and your supplies?”

“There aren’t many supplies,” Randy observed. “We have a herd of horses, though. I don’t know how we’ll get them there.”

“We have a semi,” Chuck explained.

“There’re about 50 horses,” Randy countered, “It would take 2 or 3 trips.”

“No problem Randy,” Chuck responded, “Do you have any livestock feed?”

“A lot of hay,” Randy answered.

They visited a while longer with Chuck and Susan both urging Randy to try and get the group to move to The Ranch. They were needed and wanted they assured him. As soon as they got back, they’d start arranging housing just in case the group decided to come up.

Susan and Chuck arrived back at The Ranch just as the scroungers returned with their collections of equipment. Chuck quickly explained that a group of 38 people in Maricopa were considering moving to The Ranch. They would need housing for 10 families.

Terry said that there were still 13 or 14 of the deluxe RV’s at the Mesa dealership, as far as he knew. Should they appropriate them tomorrow? “No,” Chuck thought. “There is still plenty of daylight, they’d better get as many as they could tonight and the remainder the next day.” Susan suggested that if the women helped, they could bring back all of the RV’s tonight.

They squeezed the 18 adults into 3 Tahoes and headed for Mesa. Terry was wrong. There were 15 large RV’s at the dealership. They fueled the vehicles, matched the keys to the dealer’s sticker and drove the 15 RV’s back to The Ranch. The next day, they would send half of the folks to Florence with Tahoes to get them outfitted and the rest of them would work to extend the utilities to handle all 15 RV’s

Around 9am the next morning the Sheriff’s office relayed a message from the Maricopa substation-telling Chuck to expect the ten families from Maricopa around noon. Eight Tahoes had departed for Florence an hour earlier.

The backhoe operator was extending the trench for the utilities and they decided to move Terry’s small trailer and Jose’s mobile home to one side. They would only have to add utilities for 10 more RV’s. The backhoe operator didn’t get the word and he had the trench for 9 RV’s in before they caught him. So they ended up leaving Terry’s travel trailer and Jose’s mobile home sitting where they were. Maria wanted to move back to her home, she said, living in a cave was awful. Susan agreed with Maria and Chuck knew when to keep his mouth shut.

Randy and his group arrived just past 12:30pm. Three of the men took the semi and

headed back to Maricopa to pick up the first load of horses. The other 7 men pitched in and helped install the utilities. The women of The Ranch, those not off to Florence, and the wives from Maricopa took the time to get acquainted. By the end of the day, the 50 odd horses were at The Ranch, food and propane distributed to the new residents and the vehicles back from Florence.

“Vandenberg said to tell you that he only has enough equipment for 4 more Tahoes,” Terry explained. “He gave us decals for the extra five vehicles, but we’ll have to take them to Phoenix to get the light bars, radios and shotgun racks.”

After supper, they installed the jerry can racks on the Tahoes and mounted the rear-side front seat rifle racks. The 5 vehicles that were going to Phoenix the next day had the decals placed on their doors. Eight of the vehicles were equipped with the winches. After the five vehicles going to Phoenix were fitted out, Chuck suggested, look for winches for the other 10 Tahoes. The semi would return to Maricopa the next day for the hay. Randy said that the thirty acres couldn’t support the amount of livestock they had, did Chuck have any suggestions?

“Randy,” Chuck replied, “If you can get some wire and posts, fence in some of the government land to the south and east. I doubt that the BLM will have time to object.”

“What’s the deal with all of the Tahoes and uniforms?” Randy asked.

Chuck took as much time as necessary to explain what the group was undertaking. By the time he had covered every detail, Randy was sitting with his mouth open.

“I think 5 of our families might want to get into that action Chuck,” Randy admitted. “The rest can take care of The Ranch and raise the food. That will give you a total of 28 for your group of wannabe Arizona Rangers including the 9 families from The Ranch.”

“Actually, 27,” Chuck corrected, “Jose’s wife Maria isn’t into this as much as the rest of us. They have a 7 month old baby.”

“Now that you mention it, Dave would be all for it, but I doubt his wife would,” Randy commented, “So make it 26. Anyway, we’ll get the hay tomorrow. We can hook onto that trailer of yours and go scrounging for wire and posts.”

The next day, the semi left to pick up the hay, two men set out in the Dodge with the trailer to scrounge for wire and posts, 4 Tahoes headed to Florence and 5 to Phoenix. When the five vehicles returned from Phoenix, they had an assortment of Sam Browne equipment including belts, magazine cases, handcuff holders, a radio pouch, an ASP pouch, a pepper spray pouch and holsters. They had worked a trade with the Deputy with the side business and they were all set in that department. They still had more vehicles than people, but they were closer. They mounted the ten winches on the Tahoes, completing the vehicle preparations.

al-Qaida – Chapter 10 – Getting Bigger

The two men sent to scrounge fencing returned; the pickup was filled with rolls of wire and there was no way to put another fence post on the trailer. They had barely scratched the surface, they said, maybe they should send the semi down to pick up more wire and T-posts.

And by the way, there was a Ford 6000 diesel tractor with a 4 bottom plow sitting at an abandoned ranch they'd passed, hadn't someone better get the tractor and plow? Randy looked at their load. If they sent the semi, he figured, they could fence more land than they needed. On the other hand, they'd better get the materials while they were available. He'd send a couple of men down to drive back the Ford tractor; it was an answer to their prayers.

Jerry had led the contingent to Phoenix to finish out the 5 Tahoes. He wanted to get with Terry, Susan and Chuck, he said, he had a bombshell. They gathered at Chuck and Susan's kitchen table to learn of Jerry's bombshell.

"Thompson led the raid on the dairy farm," Jerry explained, "The Sheriff told me that one of the ATF men had been shot to hell. He'd survived and the ATF bureau chief had given his wife a temporary job at the Phoenix ATF office to help them out.

"Apparently, the wife had been trying to get her husband to quit the ATF for quite a while; she didn't care for their heavy-handed tactics. The husband had finally agreed and the raid on the dairy farm was to be his last official function with the ATF before he resigned. Anyway, she's angry and bitter. After her first day of work at the ATF office, she contacted the Sheriff and offered to supply him with information about planned ATF operations. The Sheriff told me that he would keep us advised on tactical channel 2."

"I wondered how we were going to implement this plan," Chuck said, "I guess that solves the problem. Do you know when their next operation is planned?"

"They're still out looking for Thompson and his bunch," Jerry laughed. "The Sheriff said that they were convinced that we had something to do with their disappearance, but absent any proof, like the vans or bodies, they were going to call off the search by the end of the week."

"Hmm," Chuck responded. "Maybe we'd better leave the MP5's in the cache. If we start showing up with those weapons, it will just feed their suspicions. Maria begged off by the way. She said that if anything happened to both of them, Teresa would be an orphan. Randy has 9 people who are probably willing to join us. Our 17 and their 9 will start us out with 26 people. Figuring 2 persons per Tahoe, we can field two teams of 6 Tahoes, 12 people per team and Susan and I can float."

"What do you know about the 9 people?" Terry asked.

“Not a lot,” Chuck admitted, “But apparently there were all into Cowboy action shooting so at least they’re familiar with firearms.”

“I’ll equip them from the cache,” Jerry offered, “And get them on the range tomorrow. Randy will just have to adjust schedules to make the 9 available.”

“That’s good Jerry,” Chuck acknowledged, “Maybe Susan can work with you on that. They should have the tractor and plow back by tomorrow night; I’ll get Randy to plow those two acres above the septic field. We can let the ground lay fallow until we can plant. That will soften the soil pretty good.”

“We ought to run a water line to the garden area,” Terry suggested. “We should get some fertilizer, too and a couple of tillers to turn in the fertilizer.”

“Suggest that to Randy,” Chuck directed, “He might know where we can find a rototiller. That would be a whole lot faster than hand tilling 2 acres.”

“I’ll see if I can catch him,” Terry said rising. “They might as well bring back a rototiller when they go for the tractor, if they can find one.”

The group broke up and Susan and Chuck adjourned to the front porch. The night was cool, but not cold. “Chuck?”

“Yes Susan,” Chuck responded.

“How deep did we bury the outflow for the septic system?” She asked.

“About 12 or 13 feet deep I think, why?” Chuck asked back.

“Oh nothing,” Susan replied, “You know, you have to have at least 6 or 7 feet of clear soil below the garden don’t you?”

“I didn’t realize that, no,” Chuck replied.

“Two acres won’t be enough to feed 71 people either,” Susan added.

Slightly taken aback, Chuck asked, “Well, what do you suggest?”

“We should expand the septic field to 5 or more acres, all 12 or 13 feet deep,” Susan replied, “With the new families, and perhaps more to come, we need the discharge capacity and we need more garden space.”

“Where did you learn all of that?” Chuck asked.

“Oh, you know, around,” Susan smiled.

“Ok, we can extend the outflow lines and add more tanks and outflows,” he replied, “Will 10 acres satisfy you?”

“For now,” Susan said. “Moving those RV’s underground sure worked out well.”

“What, do you want the new RV’s underground too?” Chuck asked. “You should have said something before we dug the trench for the utilities Susan. I can’t see redoing all of that work.”

“No, we don’t want to move them,” Susan replied, “But what if we built a roof framework over the top of the RV’s? Wouldn’t that accomplish the same thing? I mean we could build the framework, top it with plywood and pile on 2 or 3 feet of dirt. It would accomplish the same thing. And, we can pull down the plywood front to the tract and recycle the plywood. We have 5 empty new RV’s, the one that Jose and Maria vacated in the tract plus Terry’s empty travel trailer. That means we can house 7 additional families right now. These are just random thoughts, Chuck, no offense intended.”

“None taken,” he assured her, “We have at least 4 days before our first mission, and if we get everyone started first thing in the morning we can do all of that before Monday. Do you have any other ideas?”

“We could build a greenhouse out of wood framing and plastic and get our garden plants started,” Susan added. “The growing season starts a lot earlier here in Arizona.”

“Isn’t it past our bedtime?” he asked. If he let her continue, she’d be up all night hatching ideas. Not that they weren’t good ideas, you understand.

The next morning, Chuck got the backhoe operator started on extending the effluent runs and digging additional runs. He dispatched Terry and Jerry to locate more septic tanks. He told them to bring plenty; Susan and he had decided to create a 10-acre septic field to increase their garden space and accommodate new families. They had better look for more RV’s while they were at it. He got Jose to supervise construction of a roof over the two trailers and 15 new RV’s. Just build until he ran out of lumber, he told Jose, Heckle and Jeckle were on the lookout for more RV’s.

By Sunday evening, the septic system included 6 additional tanks and the backhoe had extended the utility trench to reach the 8 additional RV’s that had been added to the row of homes. In fact, the backhoe operator was so frustrated with the whole affair that he extended the utility trench to allow for 20 more homes. Chuck could just put in the utilities now rather than piecemeal. Chuck didn’t know whether Susan had put him up to that or not, he wasn’t about to ask.

At least with the roof idea that Susan had their PV field could handle the demands of the additional homes. They wouldn’t have to have nearly as much. Randy was plowing the 10 acres for the garden they would be planting. He would wait to use the rototiller until just before they were ready to plant. Susan’s greenhouse turned out to be larger than

he had imagined. He had thought she meant a small building, not the 30'x50' monster she had in mind. It was a good thing that most of the new folks were handy with a hammer.

Chuck checked with the Pinal County dispatch at 4pm on Sunday. He was advised to contact the Maricopa County Sheriff on tactical channel 2. When he reached the Maricopa County Sheriff's office he was told that the next ATF operation was scheduled for Tuesday morning at dawn. A small group of 6 families located in the Maricopa Wells area was suspected of having firearms by the ATF. An ATF force of 12 was scheduled to make the raid. The Sheriff requested that they arrive at the Maricopa Wells settlement Monday evening and prevent any untoward action by the ATF.

Jerry's Heckle team, accompanied by Chuck and Susan left for Maricopa Wells just after noon on Monday. It was easy to find the settlement because Maricopa Wells was a place, not a community. It was on the Gila River Indian Reservation. Only the fact that they were local law enforcement prevented the small group from opening fire on them with their single firearm, a .22 rifle. The group was in far more desperate straits than Randy's group from Maricopa. They had almost no food or water. They didn't have any transportation.

Why the ATF would consider them a threat was beyond Chuck's imagination. The group consisted of 6 couples from the Mesa area that had bugged out but had to stop when one of them broke an ankle. Although the ankle had healed, they lacked the wherewithal to move another step. Susan and Chuck got two cases of MRE's from their Tahoe and fed the group. The group readily accepted an invitation to relocate to The Ranch. They piled the six couples and their 13 children into 5 of the Tahoes and the 5 Tahoes left for The Ranch. Chuck, Susan, Jerry and Don decided to wait for the appearance of the ATF force the next morning. Chuck advised the Maricopa and Pinal County Sheriffs of the situation.

"It makes you wonder doesn't it," Jerry said.

"What? Why would the ATF worry about a small group like this whose most dangerous weapon was a .22 rifle?" Chuck asked, "Is that what you mean?"

"Yeah," Jerry acknowledged, "That's exactly what I mean."

"Don't ask me to explain it," Chuck replied. "When they raided The Ranch, they assumed that we were only 9 people and they sent 16 agents."

The four of them sat around the campfire and as the sun's rays began to reveal a new day, 3 ATF van's pulled up and the 12 agents piled out arms at the ready.

"Sorry to disappoint you folks," Chuck said, "But they were gone when we got here yesterday afternoon."

“Gone where?” an ATF agent asked.

“I don’t have any idea,” Chuck laughed, “They didn’t leave a note.”

“Then what are the four of you doing here?” the agent asked.

“The Sheriff said for us to be here when you showed up, so we waited for you,” Chuck explained.

“How did you know we were coming here?” the agent persisted.

“It just figured,” Chuck said, “You feds never pick on anyone your own size.”

The federal agents piled back into their vans and spun their wheels leaving. One of the agents suggested that they must have a leak. Why else would the locals be here waiting for them?

The four mounted up and drove back to The Ranch. The six families had been settled in the new RV’s, fed and had their first good nights sleep in weeks. The ranch group was down to 9 empty units and it would be at least 2 weeks before the new arrivals were well enough to participate in the activities of The Ranch.

Randy had finished plowing the garden on Monday and over half of the residents were with him driving posts and stringing wire. They already had ¼ mile of wire up and had turned the corner heading west, stringing the second leg of wire. By night, a new grazing range of 160 acres was wired in and the livestock was turned loose on the new range. The group had grown from 33 to 71 to 96 in a surprisingly short time. Food was going to be a problem unless the garden had good yields.

Chuck and Susan, Jose, Maria and Teresa, Terry and Lynn and Jerry and Helen were spread out on the front porch after supper drinking iced tea and visiting.

“Chuck, with all of the new people our supply of diapers is running short,” Jose informed him.

“That’s right Chuck, and the Enfamil and baby food are about gone, too,” Maria added.

“Well guys, anyone up to going scrounging tomorrow?” Chuck asked.

They all agreed to go to Mesa. Jerry suggested that they hook the trailer to one of the Tahoes, but Chuck upped the ante suggesting that they take the trailer and the semi. The Heckle team, fresh from their victory over the ATF would make the trip. Terry and Jose would go along, too.

The next morning, Chuck got up from an empty bed. He expected to find Susan in the kitchen but she was nowhere to be found. Just when he was ready to start to look for

her, she and Lynn walked in the house. Susan immediately headed for the bathroom and Lynn sat down with her brother-in-law.

“What’s wrong with Susan?” he asked.

“Well I can’t be 100% sure,” Lynn grinned, “But I think you’re going to be a father.”

“What?” Chuck said, “She told me she and Paul couldn’t have any kids.”

“And you just assumed that it was Susan who was infertile, didn’t you?” Lynn gave him a stern look.

“Uh, well yes,” Chuck admitted. “This is great! Damn, I’m going to be a father. Say Lynn isn’t Susan a little old for a first child?”

“Oh I don’t think I’d worry about it too much,” Lynn assured him. “There have never been any problems in our family and she’s as healthy as a horse.”

“But don’t they usually run some special tests if a woman get pregnant for the first time this late in life?” he asked.

“You’re going to play hell getting an ambio done,” Lynn advised. “I suggest that you trust God to see you through this. Women have been having babies for, well, it must be years now; relax papa, and be as supportive as you can.”

Susan returned to the kitchen and Lynn made her a cup of hot tea. “Ah Chuck, I’m afraid I can’t make it to Mesa with you today, I’m not feeling too well.”

“Lynn already explained,” he said, giving his wife a tentative hug and a wet kiss.

“Hey, I won’t break,” Susan said, “You can give me a better hug than that.”

Chuck took Susan in his arms and hugged her until her suddenly covered her mouth with her hand and ran to the bathroom.

“This is going to take some getting used to,” he admitted.

“You guys go ahead and head to Mesa,” Lynn assured him, “I’ll keep an eye on her.”

Chuck put on his Sam Browne belt and headed for his Tahoe. Terry was sitting in the front seat and Jose was sitting in the back. The grins on their faces told him that Lynn must have said something to Terry and Terry something to Jose. The rest of the group stopped by his Tahoe to congratulate him before they got into their Tahoes. He wondered if he was the last one to know that they were pregnant.

The trip to Mesa took on a new meaning for Chuck. Supplies were becoming hard to

find, but he pushed the men and they finally managed to locate all kinds of disposable diapers, Enfamil powder, baby food and eureka, a lot of Charmin tissue. They also stumbled across a loaded grocery delivery truck that hadn't been looted or seized by the Army. They finally got the truck to start and the vehicles headed back to The Ranch.

When he arrived at The Ranch, Susan, obviously feeling better, had a message for him from the Maricopa County Sheriff. The ATF had a huge raid planned for the next day and the Sheriff was worried. The settlement they were planning to raid was a large, prosperous group in Chandler. While the Sheriff hadn't exactly used the word ambush, Chuck knew what they had to do. They rounded up Heckle and Jeckle and drove to Chandler, four persons to a vehicle. They set up a trap on El Pecos road and hunkered down to wait for the ATF.

al-Qaida – Chapter 11– ATF, round 3

Chuck brought his Barrett M82A1M and both scopes. If it got too light for the night scope, he could switch to the day scope in moments. The plan was to stop the first ATF van and the last ATF van, blocking in the others. He set up the Barrett M82A1M, adjusted the night vision scope and sipped on some coffee. He had used his canteen cup and stove and a heat tab to boil some water and then added some instant coffee. It tasted horrible, but was better than nothing. The people were spread out along the south side of the road to allow them to hit the ATF people as they piled out of the vans.

He thought about the Maricopa Wells thing and the advice Jerry had given him afterward. Jerry had told him that in Jerry's opinion he had all but told the ATF that they had a spy in their midst. Chuck had better learn to keep his mouth shut.

Just before dawn, a convoy of 10 ATF van's appeared traveling east on El Pecos road at about 40 miles per hour. Chuck was positioned for a nearly straight on shot and he fired on the lead van at a range of 1,000 yards. When the massive .50BMG round hit the driver, he must have jerked the wheel to the left because the van jerked to the left and rolled. The other van's screeched to a halt to avoid the lead vehicle. Jerry pumped several rounds into the cab of tail end Charlie and the other 8 vans were effectively blocked in.

As the ATF agents began to pile out of the vans, the group opened up on them taking out the first agents to egress the vehicles. The agent's who hadn't made it out of the vans stayed inside; the vans afforded them the only concealment they had. They returned fire, shooting wildly because they couldn't make out any targets in the faint light of the breaking dawn.

Slowly, methodically, the group riddled the vans with the M855 .223 ammo, working from the ends of the convoy toward the middle. They continued to fire until they stopped receiving return fire from the vans. They then waited a full 10 minutes before approaching the vans. Finally the Deputy's rose and carefully approached the vans.

Chuck had instructed them that there were to be no survivors. Any ATF agents who survived the attack were killed. They then stripped the bodies of any usable gear and collected the weapons, ammo and the AT-4 missiles. One of the missiles had taken a round from a .223 and was left where it lay. They loaded everything into the Tahoes and Chuck dispatched all of the Tahoes except for his and Jerry's back to The Ranch. He contacted the Chandler group on tactical channel 1 and told them they were coming in.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio had deputized the Chandler group and had equipped them with a radio. He had not seen fit to form a group of 'vigilantes' as had his counterpart from Pinal County. Chuck and Jerry arrived at the compound and the small group of men and women were invited to have breakfast.

When the leader of the Chandler group asked them if they'd heard gunfire, Chuck told him, no, that must have happened before they arrived. They were just here to check on the group and to see if they needed anything. They had finished breakfast and were making a guided tour of the Chandler facility when 4 ATF vans and a contingent of military arrived at the front gate. The agents were invited in, much to their surprise, and Roy Johnson, the Chandler leader asked them what they wanted.

"Did you folks hear gunfire right around dawn?" The ATF leader demanded.

"Yes we did, but we didn't investigate. We just increased our security level and waited for an attack," Johnson explained. "Why, what was it all about?"

The agent explained that an ATF convoy had been attacked about a mile west of the compound just at dawn.

"Well, it wasn't us," Johnson insisted. "Check our weapons if you don't believe me. None of them have been fired except at targets."

Noticing the Maricopa County Sheriff's badges that every Chandler adult wore, the ATF agent knew that the locals had outfoxed him. He had his agents check several of the weapons and found that they had, indeed, not been fired recently. He then turned his attention to the group from The Ranch.

"What are you folks doing here?" he asked.

"The Sheriff asked us to come check on these folks," Chuck replied. "And before you ask, we left our ranch just after dawn and arrived here about 45 minutes later. We didn't hear anything, Roy already asked us."

"I just find it strange that you people were at Maricopa Wells and now here," the agent said.

"Must be a coincidence," Chuck shrugged his shoulders. "But if you're still looking for the Maricopa Wells people, they showed up at The Ranch about a day later. They're in pretty tough shape. They were all but crawling by the time that they made it to The Ranch."

"All nicely deputized and everything, I suppose," the agent scoffed.

"Sheriff's orders," Chuck replied.

"Heavily armed, I suppose," the agent responded snottily.

"Well, if you'd call having a single Ruger 10/22 rifle being heavily armed..." Chuck replied.

"I want to check your weapons," the ATF agent insisted.

"I should tell you to go straight to hell," Chuck snapped. "But go ahead, check them. Each vehicle has 2 shotguns and 2 .308 main battle rifles. They haven't been fired recently either. But, if you're going to do it, do it now; we've got to get back to our ranch."

ATF agents looked in the Tahoes and confirmed that neither vehicle contained either a .223 caliber rifle or a .50 caliber rifle.

"You're clear," the agent reluctantly admitted.

"Good, we're leaving," Chuck said. He turned to Roy and extended his hand.

"It was nice to meet you Roy and thanks for the breakfast," he said. "If you need anything let the Sheriff know and he'll pass it on to us."

They climbed in their Tahoe and returned to The Ranch. Not a word was spoken the entire trip back. When they arrived back at The Ranch, each person went his or her separate way. Perhaps the carnage of their assault on the ATF had gotten to them a little, who knew?

Susan was sitting at the kitchen table drinking tea. Chuck gave her a hug and a kiss and poured himself a cup of coffee.

"It's already all over the radio." Susan said.

"What are they saying?" Chuck asked his interest piqued.

"Only that a group of 40 ATF agents who were on their way to inspect the settlement at Chandler were ambushed by criminal elements and killed," she related. "How did it go? Was anybody hurt?"

"Not on our side," Chuck replied. "I sure hope that they get the message soon, I'd rather not continue this. It goes against my grain to kill law enforcement officers. But as long as they insist on enforcing Clinton's illegal Executive Orders, I don't see that we have any choice."

"He's coming to Phoenix," Susan responded.

"Who?" Chuck asked.

"Clinton," she said, "He issued a press release condemning the lawlessness in the Phoenix area and said that he was personally going to visit Phoenix and get a handle on the situation."

"Oh really," Chuck smiled.

“You’re not thinking what I think you’re thinking are you?” Susan responded to his smile. “Charles Tunis, you’ll get yourself killed and leave me a widow and our unborn child an orphan.”

“Not if we do it right,” Chuck replied. “How are you feeling? Is the morning sickness still bothering you?”

“Don’t change the subject Chuck,” Susan retorted, “But thanks for asking. I’m feeling better and the morning sickness comes and goes. If you hatch some wild scheme, you make sure that you keep your mouth shut and only let those involved in it with you know anything about it.”

“Ok. When is Clinton coming to town?” Chuck asked.

“Sometime next week,” she said, “They weren’t any more specific than that.”

“I’m going to get a shower and some sleep,” he told her. “Can you wake me up around 4 o’clock?”

“Sure honey,” Susan replied.

Susan gently shook Chuck awake at 4pm. He splashed some water on his face, brushed his teeth and headed to the kitchen for the fresh coffee he smelled. He poured himself a cup and told her that he was going to look for Heckle and Jeckle. He found the two of them near the garden area watching Randy rototill the field.

“Susan says that Clinton is coming to town next week,” Chuck greeted the two men.

“Oh really!” the two men echoed each other.

“I was thinking that if something happened to him while he was in Phoenix and it could be blamed on the ATF, our problem might be solved.” Chuck observed.

“That would be a suicide mission boss,” Jerry frowned.

“Not if we can figure some kind of an edge,” Chuck replied. “Just what that edge would be, though, I have no idea; let’s wait and see what we can find out about the trip.”

The next day the 3 men drove to Phoenix to check in with Sheriff Arpaio. It was a shame about those ATF guys, they said. Sheriff Arpaio looked over the top of his reading glasses and shook his head, thinking, “This is a cold bunch.”

They inquired about the President’s trip and he’d showed them the tentative schedule. Clinton was to arrive at 10am next Tuesday. He was to visit the relocation center and then attend a presentation. The ATF was presenting him with an M16 captured from the

group at the dairy farm. Clinton was then going to make a speech and return to Washington. They thanked the Sheriff and headed back to The Ranch.

Chuck was deep in thought all of the way back to The Ranch. When they arrived, he excused himself and went to the cache to examine the contents. He discovered a dozen or so ATF outfits that, aside from a little blood, were in serviceable condition. He then scrounged through his junk box and located a clear plastic tube. He checked and it fit into the stock of an M16 right where the cleaning kit was stored. It was a bit long, so he shortened it until it fit perfectly.

He then got a stick of C-4 and packed the tube with the C-4. He inserted a radio-controlled detonator into the C-4 and inserted it into the well in the butt of the rifle. It fit perfectly and the additional weight was only slightly noticeable. In fact, a rifle with an empty magazine and the explosive charge weighed almost the same amount as a rifle with a loaded magazine. He shorted out the antenna lead to the detonator and took the radio control to the house. He replaced the battery in the control and put it in his dresser drawer in the bedroom. He didn't say anything to Susan about his plan.

The next morning, Chuck led Terry and Jerry to the cache. He showed them his improvised explosive device and explained his plan. They would attend the presentation ceremony along with the other contingent of Deputy's from the Maricopa County Sheriff's office. They would take the 3 cleaned ATF outfits, in duffel bags, and wearing one uniform or the other attempt to place the explosive in the stock of the presentation rifle.

Security would no doubt be tight, and the Secret Service would no doubt inspect the weapon carefully. However, Chuck said that he imagined that most of their focus would be on protecting the President. If they could work within the small window of time between when the Secret Service inspected the M16 and when the Regional ATF Director presented the weapon to Clinton, they might just be able to plant the explosive device.

"That's a lot of ifs and maybes, Chuck," Jerry cautioned.

"True," Chuck acknowledged, "But we need only a moment to plant the explosives. We'll just play it by ear and seize the opportunity if it's presented. If not, we've lost nothing. Carpe Diem."

Terry got Lynn to clean the ATF clothing and vests, swearing her to secrecy. When she asked what it was all about, he shined her on, saying that he just wanted to see if they could clean up the uniforms. Lynn figured that there was more to it than that, but she let the matter drop.

The following Tuesday, the three men dressed in clean unofficial uniforms and loaded their duffels in the back of Chuck's Tahoe. They drove to Phoenix and checked in at the Sheriff's office to get passes to attend the presentation ceremony. The Sheriff, suspecting nothing, issued the passes to the men and told them that Clinton's plane was inbound.

The Secret Service had been all over the city checking every possible vantage point for a sniper. They had men posted on all of the buildings, had removed mailboxes and anything else capable of concealing explosives and had inspected the presentation rifle several times, eventually welding the bore and bolt. The weapon was being kept in the Director's office until the presentation ceremony.

After they'd left the Sheriff's office with their passes, Chuck pulled the men aside. "That's the opportunity we've been looking for," he said.

"What?" Jerry asked.

"One of us can dress up in an ATF outfit and slip into the Director's office and plant the bomb." He explained.

"It will have to be me," Terry said, "They know both of you by sight. But what excuse do I use to get into the Director's office?"

"I picked up a file folder from one of the vans when we were in Chandler," Chuck explained. "Walk in like you belong, put the folder on the desk and plant the explosive if you have the opportunity. All of the law enforcement ID's are the same with the blue stripe, including those issued to the ATF. Unless someone stops to read your ID, they won't even know you were there."

Terry changed into the ATF uniform while Clinton was at the Relocation Center and using the file folder ruse was able to waltz right into the Director's office and plant the bomb. He was in and out in less than a minute and the men joined the contingent of Sheriff's Deputy's waiting for Clinton to arrive for the presentation ceremony.

They were searched when they entered the auditorium for the ceremony. Chuck had secreted the small remote control in the loop of his handcuffs and it went unnoticed. They were made to surrender their handguns, and readily did so. The auditorium was filled with ATF agents and military.

The Sheriff's Deputies were at the back of the room, barely able to see the President and the Director. Chuck slipped the control out of his handcuff case unnoticed and extended the short antenna. When the Director handed the M16 to Clinton, he pressed the button, detonating the bomb. He quickly wiped the control with an antiseptic pad he had in his pants pocket and in the confusion that ensued, as people streamed from the auditorium, dropped the control into a trash receptacle.

The men made no attempt to leave the area, commiserating with their fellow Deputy's about the tragedy that just took the President's life. Obviously, some militant faction of the ATF was behind this, it was suggested. After all, hadn't the weapon, the apparent source of the bomb, been in the possession of the ATF the whole time? They turned in their ID's to the Sheriff and late in the day, having been interviewed by the Secret Ser-

vice, returned to The Ranch.

“Someone blew up the President!” Susan said when they arrived home.

“We were right there Susan and saw the whole thing,” Chuck explained, “Just as the Regional ATF Director was handing the M16 to Clinton, it blew up! I can’t believe it!”

“Well, they’ve sworn in Schumer as President already and he is claiming that the ATF is behind the bombing,” Susan reported. “They are rounding up all of the ATF agents and putting them in internment camps. The military will assume the role of the ATF from now on.”

“Can you imagine that?” Chuck replied, “I just hope that they’re a little more level headed than the ATF was about seizing firearms.”

Terry quietly slipped the duffel bags from the back of Chuck’s pickup and took them to the cache. He had been all in favor of ditching the bags, but Chuck had said that they might have left fingerprints on something and they’d better take them back to The Ranch. Rather than create a scene, which would only draw attention to them, Terry relented.

Meanwhile, now President Schumer nominated the grieving widow, Hillary Rodham Clinton for the vacant Vice Presidential position. After the closed casket funeral in Washington, DC, the Congress voted to confirm the nomination. The appointment was passed by the Senate but failed, by a single vote, to pass in the House. Motions to reconsider were rejected.

Eventually, Schumer succeeded in getting Senator Daniel Inouye from Hawaii as his Vice President. Although Inouye had voted for the Assault Weapons Ban, many analysts felt he would not support the continuing attacks on the Constitution. Inouye, a veteran of WW II, was a member of the U.S. Army's 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the famed "Go For Broke" Regiment and had given his right arm for his country.

al-Qaida – Chapter 12 – Chuckie

The ATF agents were placed in the same Relocation Centers that they were responsible for filling. Inside of 2 weeks, most of them perished at the hands of the other internees. No doubt, Chuckie Schumer had planned that all along, but he steadfastly denied it. He continued to try and expand on powers of the Presidency, issuing one Executive Order after another.

Unlike the ATF, the US Armed Forces were reluctant to arrest anyone for mere possession of a firearm. They were sworn to Protect and Defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic, not follow the illegal orders of a President who ignored the Constitution with increasing frequency.

By March, the weather was warm enough to plant the garden. Everyone pitched in and everything was planted within a few days. There had been no more radio calls from either Sheriff's office for any more action by the residents of The Ranch. Randy had fenced in another area of ground, and The Ranch now covered nearly a half section of ground.

A trip to the overrun dairy farm had produced a few calves missed by the ATF when they rounded up the cattle after the raid. The newly fenced area was plowed and seeded with an alfalfa/clover mix to produce hay for the livestock. No additional resident's had joined the community since the group from Maricopa Wells. Notwithstanding that fact, they had recovered enough additional RV's to fill the extra 20 spots that the backhoe operator had created.

As the late winter moved into early spring, the garden began to produce fresh vegetables. Chuck realized that they had no means to preserve the vegetables and they went scrounging in the Tempe, Mesa, and Apache Junction areas. They literally spent weeks going from store-to-store and then house-to-house. They were locating canning supplies, but barely at a rate to meet the production of the garden. A side trip to a public library yielded a book on canning and the resident's struggled to learn the skill. Chuck's older feeder calf was large enough to butcher and they had fresh meat for a while, canning what wouldn't keep.

Susan's belly was beginning to swell slightly and she calculated that the baby was due in August. Chuck figured he was a bit long in the tooth to become a father for the first time, but only his own exceeded Susan's joy over the pending birth. It turned out that the group from Maricopa Wells was a bit more liberal than the other resident's of the settlement, but they were willing workers and as long as they didn't voice their liberal puke, no one gave them a second thought.

They were reluctant soldiers at best, grudgingly accepting that their continued presence at The Ranch was contingent on their learning to use firearms and being willing to defend the community. In the privacy of their homes they began to plan breaking away from The Ranch and forming their own community more in keeping with their political

leanings.

Of course, there were few secrets at The Ranch as had been proven time and time again. When Chuck got word of their plans, he confronted them. It was true, they admitted, they had discussed moving back to their old neighborhood in Mesa. Chuck told them that they were free to leave anytime.

They had made their contribution to the community and he would provide them with food and transport them wherever they wanted to go. He would even provide them with firearms and ammunition to protect them. Having never experienced any confrontation, they were reluctant to accept the firearms, agreeing only at Chuck's insistence that they accept a single SKS and 60 ten round stripper clips. On the last day of June, the newest resident's of The Ranch became the first residents to move on.

Chuck was totally ambivalent concerning their departure. He gave them all of the MRE's which he knew wouldn't last more than another year in the conditions that they were being stored in. He also gave them a reasonable share of their older canned goods. He figured that they would last a month or two at most.

He made sure that they understood that if it didn't work out for them, they would have to find another community to join, no offense, but they wouldn't be welcomed back. They drove the group to their neighborhood in Mesa and dropped them and their supplies off. He wondered how long it would take them to discover that they didn't have running water or electricity. Oh well, it wasn't his problem any longer.

The military had succeeded in cleaning up the devastated cities. They had to resort to mass graves and ended up burying nearly $\frac{2}{3}$ of the US population. Those people not killed outright by the bombs either died of radiation poisoning or from disease forced upon them by the lack of clean water supplies, adequate sanitation and a lack of food. Unable to supply the troops in Afghanistan, the military had ordered their recall over the objections of the new President and Congress. The grasp of the liberals began to slip in Congress and nearly half of the Congress had abandoned his or her political party and declared that they were independents.

With the erosion of the President's political base and his increasing rants, the military had had enough. They overpowered the Secret Service and executed Chuckie on the spot. Vice President Inouye became the new President. He immediately declared himself to be an independent and began to repeal the flood of Executive Orders issued by his two predecessors. The military tried everything within their power to provide for the residents of the relocation camps and slowly began returning the people to their communities or to a new community of their choice.

Unfortunately, the Relocation Center in Phoenix was one of the last to be closed and on a hot day during the month of July, the residents' of the Relocation Center took it upon themselves to close the camp. Unlike the orderly dismantling of the other camps around the country, this camp closing was disorderly and violent.

At the first sign of trouble, the military withdrew leaving the residents to sort out matters for themselves. They overran the armory the military maintained at the site and thousands of people fled to the surrounding community; hundreds of those fleeing were armed with whatever weapon they could find.

The Sheriff of Maricopa County recalled all Deputies and they fortified the main Sheriff's station and waited out the mass exodus. It didn't take the refugees long to discover that running water and electricity had only been selectively restored to the Phoenix area. They had literally leaped from the frying pan into the fire.

The Sheriff put out a broadcast to all of the settlements with radios and asked the ABC affiliate in Flagstaff to broadcast a warning to all settlements about the gangs. The military waited for three days for reinforcements to arrive before they attempted to quell the disturbances and restore order. By that time, the refugees had done a pretty good job of demonstrating survival of the fittest. The small Maricopa Wells group succumbed to the first attack. The many of the remaining groups of people who survived the first three days became marauding gangs.

The group that hit the Maricopa Wells group had spent some time with two survivors of their initial attack. They were able to persuade, using burning cigarettes, the survivors to disclose the locations of the two settlements that they had heard rumors of while in the Relocation Center. The smaller of the groups numbered about 70 and had seemingly relaxed into a farming community on a ranch 20 miles southeast of the Junction. These people had been a part of that group but had left.

According to the tortured survivors, they didn't even have a defense system. The last survivor to die told them that they had never seen the group fight anyone. The leader of the marauding group assumed that the group at The Ranch was like the bunch of sheep they had just wiped out. They gathered the food and set out for The Ranch.

Anticipating such possible attacks, the Chandler group and the Ranch group had made contingency plans to deal with any attack. Due to the lay of the land, the only easy access to The Ranch was by the road, which came from the north and turned west at the northeast corner of the property. When they received the notification from the Sheriff, The Ranch group had implemented their plan, building fighting holes inside the north fence line and on the other side of the east-west road.

They reestablished the lookout on the roof of the house. The fighting force was divided into two elements, which took the names 'front liners' and 'back shooters'. The latter group was equipped with the MP5SD suppressed submachine guns and assigned to the positions on the other side of the road. The old first blast-second blast procedure with the air horn signaled the people to take their positions on the first blast and attack on the second blast.

Late on the third afternoon, the leader thought he heard a blast from an air horn but

dismissed it as his imagination. They were close to The Ranch now, within 5 miles, if what the survivor had said was true. It took them more than an hour to walk the last 5 miles to The Ranch.

They could see the sandbagged fighting holes as they came closer but the holes didn't appear to be manned. Rounding the corner, the leader spread out his forces and prepared to attack. He was a little on edge not seeing anyone, but he assumed that the sheep had run off when his group had approached. As his group began to lift the strands of barbed wire to pass through he heard a long loud blast from an air horn. It proved to be the last sound he ever heard.

Chuck and Susan lay on the roof of the house. He had tried to dissuade her, but she would have none of it. They watched for over an hour while the group of marauders approached. He realized that he had sent his people to the fighting holes far too soon, but it was too late to do anything about that now. He just hoped everyone kept his or her head down until he gave the second signal.

When the invaders lifted the top strand of barbed wire and stepped down on the middle strand to allow their comrades to climb through the fence, he blew the air horn for the second time. The back shooters rose and opened fire, raking the line of intruders. The front liners waited for the back shooters to stop firing. When they did, the front liners rose in their fighting holes and finished off the intruders. The battle (slaughter) lasted barely 90 seconds. The ranchers collected the weapons and loaded the bodies on the 24' trailer.

After the trailer set off behind the backhoe to bury the people, Terry asked Chuck, "How do you suppose that they knew we were here?"

Chuck pointed to the Ruger 10/22 and then to the SKS rifle that he had given to the Maricopa Wells group when they left. Terry stared at the weapons for a moment before it dawned on him. "Oh," was all he said. Chuck got on the radio and reported the event to the Pinal County Sheriff's office. The dispatcher took the report and said that he would pass it on to both Sheriffs and to the military.

The military having been sufficiently reinforced began to seek out the groups. Those that offered no resistance were given assistance as had been planned all along. Those that resisted felt the full force of the military might. It took the military a full week to restore order to Phoenix. Analysts would later conclude that the Battle of Phoenix, as it came to be known, had been inevitable. Because services had been selectively restored, the military had been forced to delay the release of the people from the Relocation Center and the delay had pushed people over the edge and put them in a mood to fight.

The military wanted to evaluate the firefight that had taken place at The Ranch. They felt that the information might be useful to other small enclaves that were beginning to appear in the greater Phoenix area. They sent a Gunnery Sergeant and a driver to The

Ranch. The Gunny and Chuck hit it off right away. Chuck swore he knew the guy from somewhere, but couldn't place him. Chuck walked the Gunny through the attack, explaining that they had attacked the invading group from the rear first using MP5SD submachine guns.

The Gunny who had been stationed in Phoenix ever since the bombings, raised an eyebrow at the mention of the MP5SD's. He spent a lot of time looking over the defenses and finally gave his stamp of approval. Chuck invited the Gunny and his driver to stay for supper. Why not the Gunny said, they hadn't had a home cooked meal in a long time.

After dinner, Chuck, Jerry, Terry, Jose and the Gunny were sitting on the front porch when the Gunny dropped a bombshell.

"Still have the M72's?" he asked.

"What's an M72?" Chuck asked back.

"You don't remember me do you Master Sergeant?" the Gunny stated.

"Gunny, it seems like I should, but for the life of me I can't place you." Chuck replied.

"Do you remember when you were TDY down at Pendleton?" the Gunny asked.

"Hell yes, you're the guy who taught me how to use the LAW rocket," Chuck exclaimed, "Dang, that was years ago. How come you're still a Gunnery Sergeant?"

"Well, the Corps giveth and the Corps taketh away," the Gunny laughed. "Got drunk one night, punched out a Navy Ensign and I lost 2 stripes. Damn good thing it wasn't a Marine 2nd Lieutenant, or I'd still be a private."

"Anyway Gunny, what's with the question about the M72's?" Chuck asked.

"Just who in the hell do you think arranged for you to get that supply of M72's?" the Gunny asked.

"You?" Chuck replied flabbergasted.

"And, I'd wouldn't tell too many people about those MP5SDs you took off the ATF boys after you killed them either," the Gunny said. "Or the AT-4's."

"Shirley. You're Gunnery Sergeant John Shirley," Chuck finally remembered. "Do you want to see what I've put together John?"

"Well, if you think you can trust me, sure," Gunny Shirley replied.

Chuck led John over to the barn and moved the bales of hay. He kicked aside the dirt and began to descend the ladder turning on a light as he did.

“Come on down John,” he hollered.

Gunnery Sergeant stepped into one of the best-equipped small armories he’d ever seen. Chuck explained that he had a lot more equipment but it had been issued to various residents. Shirley evaluated the contents of the cache noting overages and shortages.

“It looks like you’ve been using C-4 to blast fighting holes,” John commented. “Your supply of C-4 is pretty low. Want to trade an MP5SD for a case of C-4?”

“I’ll give you 2 MP5SD’s with extra magazines for 2 cases of C-4, 1,000 feet of det cord and some detonators,” Chuck offered.

“Make it 3 MP5SD’s and you have yourself a deal,” John replied.

“Gee Sergeant, I don’t know, we’re down to our last 56 MP5’s and the ATF is all locked up or dead.” Chuck laughed extending his hand. “Pick the ones you want.”

The Gunny checked the MP5’s and selected 3 that needed a little work. “I’ll take these,” he said, “I can get parts a hell of a lot easier than you can.”

“There’s a 4th that needs work, if you want it,” Chuck offered.

“Hell yes,” the Gunny said. “I make it 3 cases of C-4 and 2,000 feet of det cord, ok with you?”

“Fine with me,” Chuck replied, “Could you include a couple of remote detonators in the bunch of detonators?”

The Gunny stopped dead in his tracks and gave Chuck a hard stare; he didn’t say anything, he just stared.

“Something wrong Gunny?” Chuck asked after a long moment.

“You SOB,” the Gunny laughed, “I was standing within 100 feet of the blast when you blew him up.”

“What are you talking about John?” Chuck feigned innocence.

“Nothing,” he replied, “Half a dozen enough for you?”

“Sure,” Chuck replied.

“You could have warned me, you know,” Gunny Shirley said.

Chuck gave John an ATF duffel bag to hold the weapons. John promised that Chuck would have ‘his goods’ in a day or two; it depended on how long he spent at the Chandler settlement.

The Gunny tossed the duffel bag into the back of the Humvee and rejoined Chuck on the porch. They sat up well past midnight, drinking beer and swapping war stories. Susan showed the driver to one of the spare bedrooms and returned to the porch to listen to the yarns the men were spinning. When she could no longer keep her eyes open, she retired for the night. Chuck and John were still going strong when she slipped off into a peaceful sleep.

The Gunny and his driver were gone when Chuck and Susan got up the next day. Chuck complained about a headache and went looking for some aspirin. When he returned, Susan said that he should have a headache, he and the Gunny had gone through 3 12 packs of beer. Chuck protested saying that he’d only had a 12 pack and Gunny had out drunk him 2 to 1. Susan retorted that that was about 9 too many for him, he had responsibilities now, after all. Chuck shut up while he still had a head.

Two days later a Humvee delivered 4 cases of C-4, 3,000 feet of det cord, and a large assortment of detonators including a dozen remote detonators. Chuck looked at the pile of explosives and decided that his secret was safe with the Gunny.

President Inouye realized that the problems facing the US far exceeded the internal problems caused by the nuclear explosions. The US was losing its status as a world leader. Clinton’s bombing of Libya and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan seriously depleted the reserves of the country.

The nukes had taken out considerable industrial capacity and the military was rapidly losing its ability to wage war. In consultation with the now independent majority in Congress, Inouye ordered all US troops home with the exception of the fleet of boomers that roamed the oceans. He ordered that all boomers be deployed, a condition that never existed under normal circumstances. He advised Yeltsin of the deployment and assured him that the US was perfectly aware that Russia had nothing to do with its troubles. He also assured the Russian leader that the US would respond to any further acts of aggression against its sovereignty.

Yeltsin had a lot of respect for the man who was President and shared some intelligence data with him out of that respect. He advised Inouye of the exact details behind the attack on America. Clinton had it all wrong, Yeltsin said. Bin Laden had purchased the weapons directly from the renegade Russian General. In fact, bin Laden had only been able to smuggle half of the weapons he had purchased into the US.

Russian intelligence hadn’t yet determined what country would be bin Laden’s next target. It could even be Russia. If Inouye was willing to risk a further loss of US prestige,

Yeltsin was prepared to provide the US with the exact location of bin Laden's store of nuclear weapons. Yeltsin warned, however, that any further attack on a Muslim country would no doubt cause a massive effort by the Muslim countries to kill every last American.

President Inouye found himself in an unenviable position. He really needed to take out the threat posed by bin Laden before bin Laden found a way to attack the US again or attack the US allies. He consulted with Great Britain; France and Germany were miffed over the attack on Libya and had broken off diplomatic relations with the US. Great Britain would back any move by the US, he was told, but he couldn't count on NATO.

Inouye contacted Yeltsin a second time. If the US struck the bin Laden camp plus made preemptive strikes against several Muslim capitals, could he count on Russia to remain neutral? Of course, he was assured, Russia would stay neutral. Inouye's translator passed him a note, containing 2 words, 'He's Lying'. Inouye told Yeltsin fine, he take him at his word, what were the coordinates of the bin Laden camp?

Before he made any move, Inouye verified the Russian intelligence by satellite. When all of the troops he had ordered home were safely on American soil, he consulted with Congressional Leaders and with their backing ordered the US to DEFCON 2. The move was calculated to warn the Russians not break their promise.

He ordered the launch of a single nuclear warhead from a submarine in the Med against the bin Laden stronghold. Shortly after the weapon had detonated destroying the stockpile, Inouye notified every Muslim country that they were targeted and the first move by any element in their counties would result in the immediate destruction of that country. It was a monumental bluff that worked for a while.

When the internal dissent threatened to cause the overthrow of their regimes, the leadership of the individual Muslim countries began to turn a blind eye to the organizations that were determined to kill off the remaining Americans.

al-Qaida – Chapter 13 – Invasion

Inouye deployed 5 carriers on each coast steaming in synchronized circular patterns between 50 miles to 200 miles off the coast, which insured that each carrier was within the CAP of at least one other carrier at all times. The Los Angeles class submarines were similarly deployed at a range of 100 miles with 4 being attached to each carrier battle group. He wanted to re-commission the decommissioned Iowa class battleships but with an economy in ruin, he had to settle for using the existing Navy.

He watched as the Muslim nations slowly returned to militancy and then surpassed even themselves, calling for a Jihad against the US, again. Vice President Orrin Hatch, the former Senator from Utah who had turned independent and had been confirmed overwhelmingly by both houses of Congress, counseled that America must prepare for the coming Muslim invasion.

As the summer began to turn to fall, the Muslim nations prepared to strike the US. Their plan called for a three-pronged attack, one from eastern Canada, a second from western Canada and a third from Mexico.

The news on the radio was raising concern in the resident's of the farm. The nation seemed to be preparing for an all out attack from foreign powers. The new President had nuked Afghanistan from a boomer that he'd slipped into the Med. (The President, by the way, had been persuaded by the Navy to get that boomer out of the Med before someone located and attacked it.)

After a brief period of quiet, the Muslim countries were calling for Jihad, according to ABC News. At the request of the military, several families had been relocated to The Ranch, filling the 35 empty RV's and trailers. The residents were allowed to screen the new resident's before accepting them. In all 136 new people arrived at The Ranch and the population swelled to 207 and then 208 with the birth of the baby.

In return for accepting the new resident's the military supplied The Ranch with fuel, some food stocks and allowed Chuck, Jerry and Terry to choose firearms from the vast store the ATF had seized.

For whatever reason, the ATF hadn't gotten around to destroying the firearms, instead filling a warehouse with the seized weapons. Anticipating a coming conflict with foreign countries, the men chose carefully, amassing a collection of MBR's, AR's and 9mm and .45 auto handguns.

They were also allowed to take ammunition and magazines for the weapons they selected. Chuck couldn't understand the complete reversal in policies of the federal government until the Gunny, now a frequent visitor to The Ranch, explained that the military was attempting to create a civilian Militia to back them in cases the invasion came.

Gunny had refurbished and sold or traded off the MP5's to fellow Marines. Would Chuck

be interested in trading more of the weapons for some heavy-duty firepower, the Gunny wanted to know? It depended, Chuck had said, on what the Gunny had to offer. The Gunny had asked Chuck if he were satisfied with the results of the previous trade and when Chuck admitted that he was, the Gunny told Chuck to trust him. For 28 of the MP5's, Gunny promised to make Chuck 'the happiest man in Arizona'.

Chuck, Jerry and Terry went through their supply of 52 MP5's and selected the 24 in best condition to keep for The Ranch. The other 28 were handed over to Gunny. Several days later, 4 six-bys appeared at The Ranch. There were 4 M2HB .50BMG machine guns, 8 M240B 7.62 caliber machine guns, 2 Mark 19 auto grenade launchers, several cases of M67 hand grenades, several cases of M406 HE rounds, additional M203 launcher kits and enough ammunition for the various machine guns to fight a not-so-small war. There were also pedestal mounts for the M2 and Mark 19's. Chuck didn't know, and Gunny didn't tell him, that except for the Mark 19's, and M203's and the grenades, Gunny had been under orders to issue the equipment to The Ranch.

In fact, across the country, the military began to issue such equipment as it could spare to the communities and settlements that were resurrecting and being formed post the nuclear onslaught bin Laden had made. Hatch had pressured Inouye to implement the plan. Inouye had resisted at first, but when the Muslim nations reneged on their promises, had given the go ahead. America was becoming an armed camp in preparation for an attack by outside forces.

Gunny frequently showed up on weekends, sometimes toting additional supplies like practice grenades, and over the month of August had supervised the installation of The Ranches defenses and trained the resident's in the use of the M2s, Mark 19s and M240s. The last time he showed up, he was sporting an additional stripe, having finally made E-8, Master Sergeant; they still called him Gunny. Another Gunnery Sergeant was likewise supplying and training the resident's at the Chandler settlement.

Susan presented Chuck with a healthy 7lb 1oz baby boy on August 29th. They had been preparing to do the delivery themselves right there at The Ranch. When Susan's labor began to become protracted, and Chuck became worried, Jerry contacted Vandenberg by radio and filled him in. Vandenberg contacted the military and they dispatched a doctor from their medical unit to The Ranch.

There were no complications; it was just the not uncommon situation that sometimes arises with the birth of a first child, her labor lasted 22 hours. They named the baby Charles David Tunis (CJ). Susan was exhausted and slept, awakening only to nurse the baby. Chuck would have passed out cigars if he had any, but he didn't and most of the resident's had given up smoking anyway because cigarettes were so hard to find. And like many new father's, Chuck fairly strutted with pride from the birth of their new son.

Meanwhile, France provided some of the Muslim countries with intelligence about the preparations the American's were making. The Muslim countries paid for the intelli-

gence data by increasing shipments of crude to the French and lowering the price on the crude oil.

The Muslim countries decided to disguise the flow of their troops by means of container ships. American satellites observed a sudden, unexplained, increase in container ships at Muslim ports. The ships were tracked to destinations in Mexico and Canada. When the US finally observed that Muslim military units had disappeared from their bases, however, the Americans finally made the connection. The connection came far too late; the majority of the Muslim forces from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan were already in North America, fully equipped and preparing to attack.

The longtime American ally, Israel, angry over the withdrawal of American forces and relieved at the disappearance of so many Muslim forces, hadn't bothered to inform Inouye of their intelligence. They were planning on taking advantage of the Middle East drawdown and rout the Muslim countries when they attacked the US.

On Monday, September 7, 1998, (Labor Day) the Muslim forces blew through the Canadian and Mexican Armies and attacked the US in force. The fight was on! When reports reached Israel, they equipped their fighter forces with nukes and attacked Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, destroying the capitals and any remaining concentrations of Muslim populations. They also attacked the Palestinian refugee camps slaughtering the Palestinians on an unimagined scale. In response to the Israeli attacks, Russia launched several missiles against Israel, nearly wiping the country off the map. The US, taken by surprise at the attacks from the Muslim countries, didn't respond to the attacks against Israel by the Russians.

Inouye, at Hatch's insistence, had flooded the Canadian and Mexican borders with troops in time to intercept the attacks. Although outnumbered, the Americans stalled the invasions. The superior US military equipment wrecked havoc on the Soviet equipped Muslims. Eventually, the battle between the US and the invaders was reduced to a see-saw between infantry forces.

The only raghead forces to successfully enter the US from Mexico were small detachments of irregular infantry by means of flanking maneuvers. The irregulars were in fact members of al-Qaida, Hamas and other terrorist organizations and they didn't play by the rules of conventional warfare. On September 10th, President Inouye suffered a fatal heart attack in the Situation Room at the White House and Orrin Hatch was sworn in as the 45th President of the United States.

Gunny and a 3 other Marine Noncoms, Gunnery Sergeants all, were at The Ranch enjoying the Labor Day festivities when the attacks came. Gunny contacted his superiors by radio and was told that he and one Gunnery Sergeant should remain at The Ranch and the other two Gunnery Sergeants should take the Humvee to Chandler and assist that group.

With the threat coming from an unanticipated direction, the two Sergeants quickly reorganized the defenses at The Ranch. The Ranch had a Militia unit of about 170 adults and teenagers, all well equipped and well trained. The militia was divided into 3 Platoons of about 56 each and each platoon into 4 squads. Each squad was equipped with 5 MBR's, which included 2 scoped M1A's and 3 M1A's with iron sights, and 9 M16/M203's. Each Platoon was equipped with 1 M240. The 2 Mark 19s and 2 M2s had been mounted on pickups and could defend The Ranch or Platoons. The other 2 M2s remained at The Ranch.

The first attack on an American settlement came when elements of al-Qaida and the Taliban attacked Tucson. Using hit and run tactics the Muslim forces decimated the two settlements in the Tucson area. Two Platoons of militia from The Ranch and three platoons of militia from the Chandler group departed to ambush the Muslims in the Eloy area.

One Platoon was left at The Ranch and two at the Chandler facility. The forces deployed on either side of I-10 near the south edge of Eloy. The Muslims, over confident from their success at Tucson, were driving from Tucson to Phoenix. They had met with scattered resistance and had obliterated the brave Americans who stood in their way. Gunny had deployed the units well and the two Mark 19s, one from The Ranch and one from Chandler were tasked to take out the lead and rear vehicles of the Muslim forces.

They were barely in place when the convoy of captured vehicles appeared from the south on I-10. Gunny held fire until the convoy was just beginning to pass his 5 Platoons. He gave the command and the Mark 19s took out the lead and rear vehicles, and then began to walk their way towards the center of the convoy.

The Americans opened fire catching the Muslims flatfooted and in the open with nowhere to hide. When Gunny finally issued the command to cease fire, the Muslim convoy lay in ruins. Rather than risking any of the militiamen, Gunny directed that the snipers with the scoped M1A's take out the wounded Muslims.

When the firing finally stopped, the 5 Platoons advanced slowly, putting an insurance round into every one of the ragheads. The Americans had one casualty; a member of the Chandler militia had a superficial wound. The nearly 200 Muslims suffered 100% fatalities. They rounded up the invaders arms and ammunition, piled the bodies in the ditch alongside I-10, pushed the vehicles to the shoulder and returned to their respective facilities.

Susan was pleased to have her husband safely at home. "How did it go?" she asked when he came into the house.

"Like shooting ducks on a pond," he replied. "It was even easier than our attacks on the ATF. We barely got set up in time. Gunny held our fire until they had nowhere to go and then gave the command to fire. He used the same tactic on them that we used on the ATF, blocking both ends of the column and then having us open fire from our secure

positions.”

“I’m just glad that we had a real soldier in charge of the whole operation,” Susan sighed.

“Hey, what am I, chopper liver?” Chuck retorted. “I was a 20 year man, too.”

“So you say, honey,” Susan laughed, “But I still have no idea what you did in the Air Force.”

“And, you never will Susan,” Chuck replied. “You’re familiar with the term Black Operations aren’t you? What I did was, well, blacker than black. Some of the things I worked on were in their very early stages when I was at Nellis. They were hidden inside of other black programs. Let me give you an example. You’ve heard of Aurora, right?”

“Yes,” Susan said, “It’s supposed to be some mach 6 airplane or something.”

“Aurora is a drone Susan,” Chuck revealed, “Not some mach 6 super spy aircraft. But, buried within the Aurora black op was a second program. That’s what I worked on and that’s all I’m going to say about it.”

“Ok,” she said, “For now,” she thought.

Susan was nursing CJ (Charles, Jr.) and he left her in peace to finish filling the baby’s belly. He grabbed a couple of beers and sought out Gunny.

“Pretty slick Gunny,” Chuck said handing Gunny a beer. “It went better than I thought it would.”

“That’s because we had the element of surprise Chuck,” Gunny said, “I wouldn’t get used to it. How are Susan and little CJ?”

“Just fine Gunny,” Chuck replied, “But she started questioning me about what I did in the Air Force again.”

“Just exactly what did you do in the Air Farce?” Gunny laughed.

“Well Gunny,” Chuck began, “I could tell you...”

“I know, I know,” Gunny laughed louder, “But then you’d have to kill me.”

“You of all people should understand military security,” Chuck told Gunny.

“Oh I do, Chuck and I wasn’t serious with my question,” Gunny replied, “But you Air Farce boys must think that the rest of us live in a vacuum.”

“What do you mean by that?” Chuck asked.

“Oh you know scuttlebutt,” Gunny said, more serious, “The word was that the Air Force let news of the Aurora program leak but with misinformation. I know for a fact that the Aurora was a drone because I’ve seen them. The word was that there was really a mach 6 aircraft buried within the Aurora program but that it had nothing to do with Aurora itself. The last I heard, it was in the test flight stage when those ragheads bombed the US.”

“I’d guess you’ll never know,” Chuck replied absently.

Jerry sauntered up, “Did you hear the news?” he asked.

“What news?” Chuck asked.

“Inouye died this morning, heart attack,” Jerry reported, “Hatch is now the President.”

“Sheesh,” Chuck replied. “Remind me not to accept the job if it’s ever offered; that’s 3 President’s in what, a little over a year?”

“Not to change the subject,” Gunny said discarding his empty beer bottle and pulling out a map, “But we need to talk about our next operation.”

“I’ll get Terry,” Jerry said and left to find Terry.

When they were all assembled including Gunnery Sergeant Douglas, Gunny pointed to the map. “I figure that they crossed right about here,” he said pointing at Nogales. (Wrong, they flanked Nogales, crossing at Locheil.) “Hopefully we got them all. (Wrong again, the second group that had crossed at Locheil at the same time was currently attacking Florence.) But, if we didn’t, they might attack Florence. (Finally got it right, Gunny.) Now if that happens...”

“Terry,” Helen yelled, “Florence is under attack.”

Chuck ran to the radio and called the Pinal Sheriff. They were all right in Florence he was told, but they had better go on alert, the Arabs were headed north on 89 toward Florence Junction.

“There’s no way we have time to cut them off Gunny,” Chuck said. “They can get to Florence Junction before we can.”

“Probably not Chuck,” Gunny said, “But I think we can cut them off. I’d bet that they’re headed for the dams.”

“Which dam?” Chuck asked.

“Maybe all three,” Gunny replied, “Stewart Mountain, Mormon Flat and Horse Mesa. If

they can take those out, they'll move on upriver to Theodore Roosevelt dam. With nothing to stop the water, blowing Roosevelt would put Phoenix in a world of hurts. And, even if they skip the three smaller dams, taking out Roosevelt alone will cause major problems. Now to get to the dams, they have to go through the Junction."

"We can beat them there if we hurry," Chuck said.

"Ok, we'll set up right here at the junction of 60 and 79," Gunny said. "Same drill as before. Let's roll fellas."

Already alerted to the attack on Florence, the residents were geared up waiting for instructions. Gunny yelled out, "Saddle up, let's roll," and the entire militia climbed into vehicles to follow. They beat the Arabs to the junction by barely 5 minutes and spread out to wait. Most people were hardly in position before the Mk-19s opened up on the lead and rear vehicles.

The Arabs had more cover here and the firefight lasted for over an hour before the militia was able to overcome the Arabs. The militia had several casualties but no fatalities. The Arabs had plenty of both but the casualties soon became fatalities. Their casualties were loaded aboard the Tahoes and taken to a military aid station in Mesa. The bodies were dumped, as before, in a ditch and the vehicles pulled to the shoulder. Most of the Tahoes and pickups were sent back to The Ranch; a few went to the aid station to check on their friends.

"Dang, that burns" Chuck complained. He inspected his left shoulder where he had taken a grazing wound. It was nothing more than a deep gouge, but the Lidocaine was beginning to wear off from where they had cleaned and stitched the wound. They gave him 2 tablets of morphine, 'in case' they told him, a tetanus shot, a large shot of antibiotics and a box of antibiotic tablets.

"Gunny walked up to Chuck having already talked to a doctor. "They tell me you're going to live," Gunny smiled.

"Of that, I have no doubt," Chuck agreed, "But this wound sure burns."

"Aw hell," Gunny added, "I cut myself worse than that shaving. Quit being the macho man and take one of those morphine tablets. It'll knock the pain right out."

"I told Jerry to explain to Susan that you were barely scratched," Gunny explained, "So when you get back to The Ranch, don't let her know how bad it burns. Here," Gunny added, handing Chuck a box of Vicodin. "Take one every four hours for a couple of days and you won't feel a thing."

"Got any more of that stuff if I need it?" Chuck asked.

"3 bottles of 100," Gunny laughed, "You won't need it."

“Maybe not,” Chuck agreed, “But just knowing you have it will take away the pain.”

When the medics were done patching up everyone’s wounds, they all piled into the Tahoes and returned to The Ranch. Lynn was standing on the front porch holding CJ and Susan rushed to check on Chuck.

“Are you badly hurt?” she asked.

“Naw, it’s just a scratch,” Chuck replied. Later in the evening he made sure she didn’t see him taking the second morphine tablet and he hid the Vicodin in his gun safe. Gunny warned him to stay away from the suds as long as he was taking either the morphine or Vicodin. Otherwise, Gunny said, the combination would throw him for a loop.

The next morning, the burning had passed and Chuck limited his pill intake to the antibiotics that the medics had given him. They finally had time to assess the actions at Eloy and at the Junction and decided that their strategy was sound. They just needed better intelligence so that they had more time to get in place. So far they had lost no lives and no one had been wounded seriously. Eventually, they figured, their luck would run out and some Arab would get a lucky shot and kill someone.

President Hatch was listening to a summary report being delivered by a bird Colonel in the Situation Room. The military, according to the Colonel, was holding its own against the invading forces. Some units had flanked their forces in southern Arizona, but the local militia had stopped one group at Eloy and the residents of a place the military had nicknamed The Ranch had stopped another group at Apache Junction.

On the Canadian eastern front, the reconstituted Canadian military and the US forces had attacked the invaders from two directions and after three days of fierce fighting had overcome the Arabs. On the western Canadian front, the Canadians hadn’t been able to assist and the US troops were up against a numerically superior force.

This group was well equipped with the SA-7 missiles and several of our aircraft had been lost. An attack of Strike Eagles was on for the pre dawn hours tomorrow led by F-16 Wild Weasels and the military anticipated a significant reduction of the Arab forces.

Hatch ordered several squadrons of Strike Eagles diverted from the northeastern front to the western front. It made more sense to him, he said, to bomb the Arabs than to go head to head with them. After the briefing was over, President Hatch told his secretary to arrange a trip to Phoenix for him as soon as practical, given the military situation. He wanted to meet that bunch of Patriots at The Ranch, he said.

Two weeks later, continuous bombing raids by the US forces had decimated the Arab forces on the western Canadian front and the US forces were able to kill or capture all of them. All that is except for a small contingent of Taliban that had traveled east to the Washington-Montana border and slipped into the US unobserved. This group was intent

on killing the US President. When they heard of the pending trip to Phoenix, they climbed aboard two tractor-trailer rigs and headed for Phoenix. They could, they figured, arrive in the Phoenix area a full week before the President's trip. According to the radio, President Hatch intended to present the Freedom Medal to a group at some place called The Ranch.

al-Qaida – Chapter 14 – A Brave New World

The Taliban group had been well trained by their brother Osama. They carried blank Bills of Lading and a portable typewriter. They dumped the goods the 2 semis contained and typed duplicate Bills of Lading. The only thing they changed was the destination to The Ranch, Mesa, AZ. They climbed aboard the trailers and applied standard locking seals, another gift from Osama. Using an old Road Atlas, they traversed the American highway system arriving in the Flagstaff area a week to the day before President Hatch was scheduled to arrive at The Ranch.

President Hatch had the FBI assemble whatever information they could find on the group of people at The Ranch. The owner of the small ranch was a retired USAF Master Sergeant who had worked on, “Sheesh, That Project?” while he had been in the Air Force. He had bought into a Phoenix gun store and been bought out 6 years later. As near as the FBI could piece together, he began to gather residents at his ranch the day of the attack.

He had met and married a widow and they had a new son. Many of the other original residents were from his old gun store and another gun store in Mesa. They had merged in a group of people from the town of Maricopa. Apparently another group was there for a while too, but they had disappeared. The group had really grown when they began accepting families identified by the military as being in need of a home.

On the negative side of the ledger, the group was suspected by the old ATF of having killed 56 ATF agents. The ATF couldn't prove anything and had been disbanded by President Schumer before they could. There was also a note from the Secret Service that 3 of the residents had been present when Clinton had been killed by the ATF. The Marine Master Sergeant, just recently promoted, had also been present at the assassination.

Well, he'd better take a gift for the baby and maybe the 3 men and the Master Sergeant deserved a little something special. Apparently some of the men were into Cowboy action shooting, but it wasn't clear if it included the 3 men or not. He put in a call to Wayne LaPierre over at the NRA. Could Wayne come up with something really special on short notice? Why yes Mr. President LaPierre had said, how about 3 Colt SAA .44-40's, engraved with ivory grips and a presentation grade .45 Colt auto for the Master Sergeant? Fine, send them over and bill the White House, Hatch told him. Oh no, Mr. President, LaPierre had insisted, no charge.

But the NRA would appreciate him signing the recall of the Assault Weapon ban that both houses of Congress had just passed. No problem Hatch told him, but the NRA would owe him a big one. He had planned to sign it anyway; it had passed both houses by a 70% margin. LaPierre knew that, too. That's why the .44-40's were selected, finely engraved at the Colt Custom Shop, he had ordered them 4 years before when the Assault Weapon ban had been passed, knowing that they would come in handy some day. Hatch had it wrong, he owed the NRA and they both knew it; there was no way he could

not sign the legislation.

“Isn’t it wonderful, dear,” Susan asked, “The President presenting The Ranch with the Freedom Medal? I’m so proud of you and the other folks.”

“He’s just making political hay,” Chuck rebuffed Susan, “I’ve never trusted the guy. There can’t be a politician as honest and decent as Hatch has always appeared to be. Politician, lawyers and reporters should all be put in a weighted bag and tossed over the side of the ship halfway to England. Do you know why a lawyer isn’t the lowest thing on the bottom of the ocean?”

“No,” Susan said, not wanting to hear his answer.

“Because he’s standing on the shoulders of a reporter. And most politicians are lawyers.”

“Sometimes, dear,” she said, “You should keep your opinions to yourself. Here, hold your son for a minute.”

Chuck took CJ in his arms gingerly. He still wasn’t used to handling a tiny baby. Just then, he caught a whiff of his son’s diaper. When Susan returned, he handed CJ to Susan and said, “I’ve got to talk to the guys for a bit, dear.” Susan knew CJ was dirty, because she’d gone to get a diaper. “Chicken,” she thought.

Actually, Chuck did have to talk to Jerry and Terry. He was afraid that the Secret Service or someone would run a background check on them and put 2 and 2 together. The ATF did suspect them, he was certain of that. Taking Clinton out and blaming it on the ATF had taken the heat off, of them and the nation. Still...

“I don’t care what you say Chuck,” Jerry responded to Chuck, “Not taking the Medal will draw more attention to us than taking it. So far as the ATF thing goes, there’s no proof. Same thing with the Clinton thing.”

“Jerry, you’re overlooking the fact that we still have 24 of the ATF’s MP5SD’s,” Terry countered. “If we got rid of them and all the ATF gear we have stored in the cache, then, and only then, would we be in the clear.”

Gunny walked up to the front porch where the men were having the hushed conversation and said, “I expect you all are having a conversation right about now about all of that ATF stuff you have in the cache, aren’t you?”

“Gunny,” Chuck hissed.

“You mean you never told them that I figured the whole thing out Chuck?” Gunny laughed, “Shame on you.”

“How’s about I take the MP5SD’s off your hands and replace them with some standard MP5’s without suppressors?” he suggested.

“Even trade?” Chuck asked.

“Even trade,” Gunny replied. “And I’ll dispose of all of the ATF gear while I’m at it.”

“Deal,” Chuck said.

Gunny looked first at Jerry and then at Terry. “Chuck probably won’t tell you this so I will. I was barely 100’ away from Clinton when you yard birds set off that bomb. I don’t mind you taking the SOB out, truly I don’t. Your secret is safe with me. Let me give you a piece of advice. Put the whole affair out of your mind. If you don’t, sooner or later someone will say something and you’ll get a guilty look on your face and you’ll be discovered. Come on and help me load up that crap from the cache. I’ll be back in the morning with your new weapons.”

Although the Taliban drivers only stopped in Flagstaff for fuel, a minor engine problem forced them to spend nearly a whole day waiting while a mechanic diagnosed and then repaired the engine. By the time they cleared Flagstaff on south I-17, the terrorists in the trailers had run out of water and were beginning to suffer from heat exhaustion. The drivers pulled off the first exit south of Flagstaff and drove several miles off the interstate before they could find a safe location to park and unlock the trailers.

The men in the trailers were in such bad shape they laid over for a day to allow them to recuperate. They still had five days to reach The Ranch when they returned to the interstate and headed south. They passed through the military checkpoints with hardly a second glance and a few hours later had arrived in Phoenix and got directions to The Ranch. After a brief consultation, they moved the trucks to Florence Junction and prepared to travel the 6 miles to The Ranch by foot.

In anticipation of the President’s visit, the Secret Service appeared at The Ranch 5 days before the visit to inspect the location and set up necessary security. A sharp-eyed Secret Service agent found that cache hidden beneath the barn. Gunny had delivered the replacement weapons the day before and they had been stored in the cache. When the agent asked Chuck what was beneath the trapdoor, he replied that that was their weapons cache and offered to open it for the agents’ scrutiny.

They inspected the cache carefully, noting the stored explosives, M72’s, AT-4’s and weapons and ammunition. They wanted to remove the weapons to insure the President’s safety but Chuck told them that the weapons weren’t going anywhere; the President, he said, could just skip the visit to The Ranch. This put the agents in a tough predicament. The sole reason for the trip was to visit The Ranch. A compromise solution was finally reached by allowing the agents to lock the cache with their own lock until after the visit.

The Secret Service was equally concerned over the majority of the residents walking around armed. Since the Muslim invasion, all militia members were armed at all times; usually with a handgun, but their rifles were never far from reach. Having lost a President in their care in Phoenix not all that long ago, the Agent-in-charge wasn't in the mood for any more compromises.

Neither was Chuck. He hadn't thought that the Secret Service would discover the cache. When they did, he had been forced, mostly by Gunny, into accepting a compromise. He was about ready to tell the Agent-in-charge to take his President and the Medal and stuff it when the agent, perhaps sensing that Chuck had reached his limit, suggested that several Companies of Marines could be brought in to provide defenses for The Ranch.

Chuck knew when he was beat and the local militia would stand down as soon as the Marines arrived. The Agent-in-charge was on the radio immediately and 4 Companies of Marines arrived 6 hours later. The Marine Commander immediately deployed his troops to secure the original 40-acre ranch property. The residents put away their guns and tended to their chores. They added a new chore, feeding the Marine Companies. Although the entire contingent had been deployed and had struggled for hours to establish fighting holes in the hard soil, the Commander allowed $\frac{1}{4}$ of the troops at a time to sit down for some hot chow. They still had 3 days until the President's visit and if his Marines were forced to remain in the fighting positions for 72 hours without a break, they'd lose their effectiveness.

The Taliban group, which numbered in the 70's, made their way to within a mile of The Ranch, traveling in groups of 2's and 3's. They holed up in a Wadi about a mile east of The Ranch. They observed the arrival of the Marine Companies and their dispersal. They were lightly armed, all with AK's and two with RPG-7's. When they realized that they couldn't carry out a successful heard-on attack against The Ranch, they altered their plan, deciding instead to slip in close enough the night before the scheduled visit and attack the President's limo with their RPGs.

The resident's were planning a barbeque for the day of the President's visit. Susan was fully recovered from the birth of CJ and she organized the event. She asked Chuck to butcher one of the feeder cattle and organized the wives to prepare potato salad, pasta salads and potluck dishes. Aside from taking time out to get Randy to butcher the steer, Chuck, Jerry, Terry and Gunny spent most of their time sitting on the front porch, just trying to stay out of everyone's way.

The night before the big day, they were sitting on the front porch enjoying a cold one, oblivious to the stealthy approach of the Taliban warriors.

"I'll sure be glad when this is all over," Chuck commented.

"Yeah," Jerry agreed, "It's been like a zoo around here for a week now. I wish that they had had the ceremony up in Phoenix. These Secret Service types have turned our lives

upside down.”

“Well at least they didn’t find anything here that would have given away our past,” Terry remarked, “Thanks to Gunny.”

“I kind of feel guilty about that,” Gunny said, “ATF stuff is worth its weight in gold, dang near. Everybody wants a souvenir. But, I’ll make up for it fellas, I swear.”

“Like you told us Gunny,” Chuck mused, “Put it out of your mind. But, if you’re going to make up for it, how about locating us a truckload of beer?”

“With the way that your wife is clamping down on your drinking Chuck,” Gunny laughed, “A truckload of beer would last you two lifetimes.”

The Taliban had begun to move toward The Ranch shortly after sunset. They moved slowly, cautiously, fearing discovery by the Marines encircling The Ranch compound. They were in place about 4am, positioned a mere 200 yards in front of the Marines. They realized that the center of the compound was beyond the range of the RPG-7’s effective range of 300 meters and the two men with the launchers crept closer, to within 100’ of the Marines. They would have but a single chance. Hopefully the Marines would be distracted by the arrival of the American President and they would have their opportunity.

President Hatch departed Andrews AFB at 9am in Air Force One. With the difference in time, they would arrive at Sky Harbor before lunch and be at The Ranch by noon. His interest in this group of Patriots was genuine. He wasn’t going to use the event for a policy speech; he just wanted to thank the group for their actions, which had protected an already devastated Phoenix from further damage. He also planned to visit the Chandler group, a fact that hadn’t made the national news. He was dressed casually, in slacks and a golf shirt and insisted in riding in the lead Suburban with the Secret Service.

They arrived at Sky Harbor around 11:30 and headed for The Ranch with the President in the lead vehicle. They arrived at The Ranch just after noon and before the vehicles had pulled completely to the stop, the Taliban fired 2 RPG-7 rockets at the limo, destroying it. The Secret Service driver pulled the Suburban over to the fruit cellar and the President was literally shoved to the safety of the underground room.

The Marines opened fire and the Taliban, thinking that they had succeeded in their mission returned fire on the Marine positions. The firefight lasted for a few minutes. The Marines took a few casualties and 3 fatalities; the Taliban warriors were wiped out. The Marines and Secret Service fanned out and determined that there were no more holy warriors preparing to attack the compound.

The Secret Service eventually let President Hatch out of the fruit cellar and the presentation ceremony, delayed for over an hour, was allowed to begin. Media coverage had been limited to a single team from the ABC affiliate in Flagstaff.

As he presented Chuck with the Freedom Medal, President Hatch asked, "Were you in charge of entertainment? That was quite the show you arranged."

President Hatch also presented Terry and Jerry with individual Freedom Medals and then the group with a Freedom Medal, the closest he could come to a Unit Citation for a group of civilians. Master Sergeant John Shirley received the Distinguished Service Cross.

The medals presented, Hatch gave each of the individuals their presentation weapons, "A gift," he said, "From a grateful nation." A skilled politician, Hatch saved the most important gift for last. He called Susan and baby CJ forward and presented her with a large collection of boys clothing, enough to last CJ until age 5, if it didn't dry rot first. His trip to the Chandler facility uppermost in his mind, the President begged off participating in the barbeque and departed for Chandler.

The corpsmen had evacuated the wounded Marines by helicopter and the dead Marines were lovingly placed in body bags for the return trip to Phoenix. Hatch informed the Secret Service while in route to Chandler that they were making an unscheduled stop to visit the wounded troops when they returned to Phoenix. He would personally present the wounded Marines with Purple Hearts. The Secret Service was ordered to make it happen. He planned to push through Congressional Medals of Honor for the 3 dead Marines and would present the Marine Companies with the Presidential Unit Citation.

Free from the scrutiny of the Secret Service at last, the resident's of The Ranch had a real blowout. They partied late into the night, the last of them finally retiring long after President Hatch had arrived back in Washington, DC.

It took several days for the news of the Muslims final defeat to reach the small hideout in Iran; nearly every Muslim of fighting age from the Middle East had been wiped out; either by the Americans and Canadians or by the Israelis. "At least," Osama bin Laden thought to himself, "The Russians have cleansed the earth of those foul Israelis. A new generation of Muslims will be born and carry the fight to those dreadful, unholy Americans. Meanwhile, I shall travel to Indonesia and reorganize our resistance."

The Americans held their elections in November of 1998. Long time politicians who refused to change their party affiliations, like the senior Senator from Massachusetts, Teddy Kennedy, lost their seats in Congress. Only 2 Republicans and 1 Democrat managed to retain their party affiliation and get re-elected.

A new mood was gripping the US and the North American continent. The governments of Canada and Mexico had suffered large losses of their militaries. However, they found a ready market for their goods and services in the recovering US. The economy of Mexico became so healthy that illegal aliens living in the US returned to Mexico to improve their standard of living. Mexico also found a ready market for its oil and its entire excess output went to the US.

France, Germany and Russia reformed the United Nations in Brussels, Belgium. An invitation was not extended to the US to join the reformed group. Building, in the beginning, on European Union and the old Warsaw Pact countries, the UN was reformed. The first act of the new UN was to seize the oilfields in the Middle East, the Israeli bombing having essentially rendered them ownerless.

With the pride of the Middle Eastern countries lying dead, either on American, Mexican or Canadian soil and the remaining populations reduced to pitiful groups of elderly men, women of all ages and children, the new UN barely had to send in a peacekeeping force. Most of the people relocated to the Middle East were oil field workers and the supply of oil began to flow to Europe and Russia, allowing them to rebuild their economies and their war machines.

NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was renamed the North American Treaty Organization and it was relocated to Toronto. It had 4 members, Canada, the US, Mexico and Great Britain. The British walked a fine line and joined the European Union and the new UN to assure them a supply of oil. Production from the North Sea fields didn't all go to Great Britain and the British, caught between a rock and a hard place couldn't afford to tie their allegiances solely to the North Americans. The British membership in the new NATO was the best-kept secret in the world because the new UN avowed that NATO was its enemy. The most that NATO could hope for was British goods delivered to Canada.

With the elections over and the new Congress sworn in, President Hatch found himself flooded with legislation aimed at undoing much of what a liberal American Congress had enacted in the preceding 40 years. The tax code was simplified to a simple flat rate income tax; all legislation regulating the possession of firearms was repealed. Social programs aimed at feeding a population unwilling to work were repealed. America was put to work rebuilding America.

The unemployment level was 0.1% of the population and represented only people temporarily unemployed. No one went without a job for more than 30 days; such was the demand for labor. America, which had become a nation where service jobs constituted a significant portion of the job market, could no longer afford service jobs. People carried their own luggage, ate at home, traveled primarily by bus and train and brought their own food with them when they did so.

One notable exception was the auto mechanics. With an automotive industry limited to primarily building vehicles for the military, people who had automobiles no longer traded in their vehicles for a new model. There were no new models. The lots of automobile dealers had been stripped. Many considered themselves lucky just to find the parts to keep their older vehicles running. American inexorably reverted to an agrarian society where the farmer was once again king. Not all of the liberals were dead, to be sure, but when faced with their own survival, a tree hugging cut down a tree for firewood. A new mood gripped the country. Congress again implemented the rationing used during

World War II to insure a fair distribution of the available goods.

The ranch remained a refuge for the 208 residents. They had everything they needed and any business they conducted was conducted right there at The Ranch. The garden had been expanded to 40 acres and they produced food for themselves and others. The following year, the garden was expanded to 60 acres. The livestock herds were too small to provide meat for resale. It would take them years to build their herds. CJ learned to walk around his first birthday. The population slowly began to grow as teenagers fell in love, married and began families of their own.

The remainder of the world ignored Africa. North America didn't have time and Eurasia, the merger of Europe and Asia, had sufficient resources within its grasp that it had no interest in Africa. Over the course of late 1998, all of 1999 and early 2000, the black Africans reclaimed their continent from the Europeans and others who had dominated them for so many years. By March of 2000, the genocide was complete. Africa was once again home only to Africans. They renamed the continent Nubia, put away years of internal strife, and overcame the Aids epidemic.

Japan stopped trading with America, having found a healthier outlet for their manufactured goods among the Europeans. And, when the Japanese learned of the preparation that the Europeans were making for the eventual invasion of North America, they said nothing. It would serve the Americans right for the atrocities of World War II.

Australia temporarily severed relations with the rest of the world. It made for tough going, but they persevered. Eventually they became a major exporter of meat, wool, leather, and wine. The Australians maintained a loose relationship with Great Britain and a secret relationship with NATO. Not even the British knew of their relationship with North America.

The election of 2000 saw the election of President Hatch as President. Congress became even more independent, as the Republican and Democrat parties faded into obscurity. A grass roots movement, forced whole changes in states like California that attempted to hold onto their liberal roots. Arnold Schwarzenegger was elected to the Governorship of California and he promised to restore the state to its former glory of the 1950's. Running on the Populist ticket, Arnold was a shoo-in. That his wife Maria refused to interrupt the campaign to attend the funeral of Teddy Kennedy, guaranteed Arnold several million votes.

ABC News reported that the widow of President Clinton was frequently seen in the company of the widow of President Schumer. The story was reported but a single time, America didn't have much stomach for gossip. Susan was expecting their second child.

The Gunny was absent from The Ranch much of 1999. He'd met a widow in Mesa and preferred to spend his time there. When he retired from the Corps in 2000, he and his new wife moved to The Ranch. Susan had her second child, a girl they named Susan Elizabeth. The baby, who came in at a whopping 7lbs 8oz on July 7th, 2001 was nick-

named Seti.

When President Hatch learned, almost by accident, of the birth of the baby girl, he set about to make arrangements for the delivery of a similar gift of clothing to the family. His Attorney General screwed up his courage and admitted to Hatch that the FBI had continued their investigation and was now convinced that the 3 residents at The Ranch were behind Clinton's assassination.

Hatch ordered the Attorney General to halt the FBI investigation and to drop the matter entirely. When the Attorney General refused, Hatch gave him 2 hours to have his resignation on his desk. He called the FBI Director personally and told him to drop the investigation. The Director refused. Hatch gave him 3 hours to have his resignation on his desk. Hatch then issued a secret Presidential Pardon for the 3 Arizona men for all offenses real or imagined, and had the Pardon delivered to the men the same day along with the gifts for the baby girl.

The word went out that anyone who leaked anything about the events of that day would find themselves out of a job and probably permanently out of breath. The strangest thing happened in the aftermath of that day. The former Attorney General and the former Director of the FBI died in a mysterious automobile explosion on their way to meet with representatives of ABC News. Two days later, the 3 FBI agents who had been conducting the investigation submitted their retirement papers. (Who says there is not a God?) In an effort to stem the hemorrhage of funds for the defense budget, President Hatch ordered half of the naval forces to their ports.

al-Qaida – Chapter 15 – WW III

The move made by the American President was the opportunity that the Eurasians had been waiting for. Obviously things were getting bad in America if the Navy was unable to defend its shores. China was now a member of the new UN. It was the Chinese who first introduced a motion to send rescue forces to North America to provide relief for their 'beleaguered brothers', the Americans. Days of discussion followed, but in the end, the Russians, French and Germans 'caved in' and supported the motion made by the Chinese.

Great Britain abstained. Everyone expected that, Great Britain and the United States had been allies since the War of 1812. Prudence dictated that Great Britain be prevented from warning NATO; did the British really think that the UN didn't know of their secret membership in the organization? Japan volunteered to supply their combat aircraft to the mix. Most of the aircraft were licensed production of American fighter designs and included the F-15 and the F-4.

It was the action of the Japanese that tipped the hand of the Eurasians. Australia supplied most of the meat for Japan. That the Japanese Air Force was up to something did not go unnoticed. Many of the Australian salesmen were also on the payroll of Australian Intelligence.

It mattered little that the British were unable to warn NATO; NATO knew of the pending attacks before the UN was even able to assemble its fleet, courtesy of the Australians. The US still had most of its satellite network and a few simple commands repositioned the satellites to observe the building armada of ships at European, Russian and Far Eastern ports.

Faced with satellite photos showing the buildup, President Hatch contacted his NATO allies. Neither ally had a navy of any size. Each would put their ships on alert, but it would be up to the US with its vast Naval force to repel the pending invasion. The photos showed that the US had plenty of time to prepare.

Hatch ordered all ships and boats made ready to sail but held off issuing sailing orders. He reasoned that the US could tell when they had time to recall the ships and resupply them for the coming battle. He would send out the in port vessels, resupply the returning vessels and have the full fleet on the high seas to meet the invasion. The US would turn to the nuclear option only as a last resort. The Russian, Chinese and French could reply in kind to a nuclear assault.

The satellites also revealed that the Russian submarine force which had been little more than rusting hulks two years before had either been scraped, or more likely, refurbished and had set sail. In most respects, the US fleet outnumbered and outclassed the Russian fleet; the difference lay in the number of submarines the Russians could field. With only 2 Aircraft Carriers, 4 Cruisers, a couple of dozen Destroyers, and a few other ships, the Russian surface navy was a joke. It was the ballistic missile submarines and the

cruise missile submarines that posed the real threat to America. The French had only recently launched the Charles de Gaulle, a nuclear powered carrier equal in capability to a 90,000-ton class American carrier, or so it was claimed.

The US was keeping its diesel-powered carriers in port due to the shortage of fuel. Retired ships were being rapidly refitted. When the time came, the 10 Nimitz class carriers would be supplemented with the 6 diesel-powered ships. Retired Captains were being recalled to duty to man the vessels being brought out of retirement. Hatch was certain, as was the military, that the US, with or without the assistance of Mexico and Canada, could strike the invading forces before they reached the US and reduce their numbers to the point that the US military and the state and local militias could repel the invaders. The only wild card remained the Russian submarines.

Meanwhile, a half a world away in Indonesia, bin Laden had rallied his Muslim supporters. He had no idea that Eurasia was planning to invade the US; he was planning his own invasion. Unlike the brute force invasion planned by Eurasia, he intended to infiltrate through Canada and Mexico.

American industry rallied to the secret call put out by the government to drastically increase production of munitions and equipment. Handled on a company-by-company basis, the government quickly got the defense industry rolling at full speed despite an inadequate labor force and limited supplies. And, since the government also had to provide for greater food supplies, uniforms and the like, the civilian sector also reaped the rewards and consumer goods began to appear with greater regularity in the settlement stores. As America continued to prepare for war, Eurasia began to assemble the troops and matériel. Noting the buildup, America prepared to launch its first line of defense, the Navy.

In late March 2002 a flotilla of 6 cargo vessels left Indonesia bound for North America. Osama's invasion was underway. Nine weeks later, ships began to sail from Russian, European and Asian ports. The UN's invasion was also underway. A few days before the UN forces began to depart; President Hatch scrambled the reserve vessels and recalled the fleet for final resupply. A few days after the UN forces had departed, the entire American Navy, 8 carriers on the west coast and 8 carriers on the east coast were positioned to repel the invaders.

The Los Angeles class attack submarines plus the Seawolf and Connecticut were fully deployed, as were the 18 boomers (the first four weren't scheduled to begin conversion until 2002). The Russian and other UN submarines rushed to neutralize the American submarines. The best of the UN forces met with some success, but the Russians had hurried the refit of their submarines and some of them were too noisy.

While the US lost 7 of the Los Angeles class boats, all of the UN boats were lost or damaged and forced to return to port. The submarine battle was an overall American victory, but the American fleet of boats was so busily engaged that the UN surface fleet

passed mostly intact past that line of defense. The Russian ballistic missile and cruise missile submarines lay back, waiting for orders that would send them into the fray.

Meanwhile, a small flotilla of rusty cargo ships slipped unnoticed into Mexican and Canadian waters. Avoiding ports, the ships lay off the coasts and boatload after boatload of Mujahedeen slipped into Canada and Mexico unnoticed. With the US military forces redeployed along the coast to repel an invasion, no one noticed the small groups of holy warriors slipping across the borders.

The Ranch and Chandler were on standby alert. Gunny's 'price of admission' to The Ranch for his new wife and himself had been a box of 24 suppressors for the MP5's he had swapped out for the ATF weapons. The ranch and the Chandler facilities had grown, in numbers of residents, in size and in agricultural output. The ranch's militia numbered 200. Chandler's militia numbered 300. CJ was 3½ years old and his sister was 9 months old. Married life had mellowed Chuck; down deep inside, however, he remained the same man, albeit a little older.

The 3 close friends had taken to riding horses to preserve their fuel supplies. The MBR's and AR's had been replaced by the Winchester carbines and the engraved presentation SAA Colt revolvers. Gunny still drove around in a Tahoe, not a white Tahoe, but a shiny red Tahoe, one of the last liberated from the Phoenix dealer's lot. Gunny was 2 years younger than Chuck and his wife, 4 years younger than he, was expecting their first child in September.

He'd also found that truckload of beer they'd discussed so long ago and the four men sat on the front porch drinking a cold one and listening to the radio. According to the radio, the invasion was still a naval battle, now between the invading UN forces and the Carrier Battle Groups. The sheer volume of the invading vessels nearly overwhelmed the carrier forces. What were seven or five carriers when the invading force resembled the Normandy invasion with literally thousands of ships in the enemy fleet? The US Navy gave a good accounting for itself, sinking over one-third of the UN ships before the carriers ran out of munitions and/or aircraft fuel and were forced to retire.

"I never thought I'd live to see the day that a bunch of foreigners invaded the US in force," Gunny said, "I would have figured Hatch to launch the nuclear missiles before that happened."

"Gunny if the US hadn't been subject to that nuclear assault by the al-Qaida," Chuck said, "I'm certain that he would have. But we have firsthand experience with a nuclear attack now and if we launch, the Russian and French and Chinese will launch. Personally, I rather fight the foreign troops than try to recover from another nuclear attack."

"Well, al-Qaida isn't a problem anymore," Jerry asserted.

"What makes you so sure?" Chuck asked, "To my knowledge, they never did find Osama bin Laden."

“What’s the difference?” Jerry countered, “We wiped out most of the ragheads from the Middle East. Us and the Israelis.”

“There are a lot more Muslims around the world, Jerry,” Chuck explained, “Indonesia is full of them and some of those folks were supporters of bin Laden.”

“Then let ‘em come,” Jerry laughed, “Well kick their hind ends, too.”

“I’m not nearly as worried about a bunch of ragheads,” Gunny interrupted, “As I am of those UN forces. We’re talking about highly trained Russian and German soldiers. Now the frogs don’t worry me all that much. But if the radio reports are correct, and the Chinese are in this, we could all be eating rice and noodles by Christmas.”

“We still have tactical nukes don’t we?” Chuck asked.

“No, they scraped the cannon shells and retired the cruise missile warheads,” Gunny replied. It was part of the nuclear disarmament thing.”

“But we still have the bombs, right?” Chuck persisted.

“Last I knew, we had about 1,300 of the little B-61 bombs that the F-15, F-16 and F/A-18 carry,” Gunny replied, “And a little over 500 of the same bombs for the B-52’s and B-2’s. Then there’re the big boys, the B-83 carried by the B-52 and B-2; there may be 600 or so of those. The nuke warheads for the ALCMs and Tomahawks weren’t dismantled, they’re in storage.”

“What about the B1B’s?” Chuck asked.

“Only carry conventional weapons now,” Gunny replied, “But let me tell you, a B1B can carry a huge conventional load.”

“Aren’t those FAE’s, a poor man’s nuclear bomb?” Terry asked.

“You’ve been watching too many movies Terry,” Gunny laughed, “Nobody uses them anymore. The Navy and the Corps eliminated the weapon after Desert Storm. The Army decommissioned the weapon in 1996.”

“The military might be forced to use the non-strategic B-61’s, but I doubt it,” Gunny continued, “I’d put my money on the CBU’s. Hundreds of little bombs raining down on an enemy destroy the enemy and the morale of the survivors. Look at what happened with the A-rabs in the Gulf war.”

“Well we’re pretty well set,” Jerry offered.

We now bring you the President of the United States, Orrin Hatch, the announcer said.

The men stopped talking and turned up the volume of the radio.

My fellow Americans, on the east coast of our country, our submarine forces intercepted and stopped a large force of enemy submarines, sinking many and forcing the remainder to retire. Our aircraft carrier task groups intercepted the enemy and sank a significant portion of ships. Unfortunately, the sheer numbers of the enemy forces exhausted our resources and our battle groups have been forced to withdraw to Canadian and US Gulf ports to resupply. Our land forces are preparing to meet the enemy.

On the west coast of our country, we had similar results with our submarine fleet, sinking or destroying all enemy submarines. Our Los Angeles class submarines accounted for several enemy surface ships, before their supply of torpedoes was exhausted. Our carrier task groups sunk over half of the enemy surface fleet, greatly reducing the threat to our west coast. Our land forces are preparing to meet the enemy along the California coast.

In the opinion of our military commanders, our land and air forces will stop the enemy at the coasts. Our Naval aircraft have been redeployed from the task groups to assist the Air Force on both coasts. I have mobilized the state militias and combined with our regular Army and Marine forces, we will resist the invasion to the last man. I have not authorized the use of nuclear weapons at this time.

In many respects, we face the Normandy invasion in reverse. And, we face it on two fronts. Unlike the Germans, we are not relying on fixed emplacements to repel the enemy. Also unlike the Germans, our Air Forces remain intact. We are facing well-trained, well-equipped enemy forces. However, we are prepared and are equally well trained and well equipped. I request that our local militia units remain on the highest alert. This office will issue updates from time to time to the media. Please stay tuned to your radio stations for further developments.

Our cause is just. We are still the best fighting force in the world. Pray for our military, as we shall pray for our country in its hour of darkest peril. Thank you.

“Dang,” Gunny said when the President’s speech ended, “Break out the chop sticks fellas.”

“Aw Gunny,” Chuck retorted, “We have them just where we want them. The Air Forces will eat them alive.”

“I sure hope so,” Gunny said, “dang, dang, dang.”

Chuck was more right than Gunny and Hatch had been less than forthcoming. He did authorize the use of the non-strategic nuclear weapons on enemy ships more than 20 miles off the coast, seriously weakening the enemy. The small, adjustable bombs destroyed hundreds of enemy vessels. Enemy forces that did make it to shore met with

little resistance from our ground forces, allowing the USAF and Naval aviation to mount wave after wave of air assaults; the CBU's did the job they were intended to do, slaughtering the enemy forces in large numbers.

The ground forces then attacked the weakened enemy, finishing them off. The battle continued for three weeks. The enemy in the state of South Carolina made the deepest penetration of American soil. There, a determined Russian force penetrated nearly 100 miles before the Air Force and Naval aviation were able to halt their advance. The Army and state militias, aided by local militias, finally brought the invasion to a halt.

My fellow Americans, I come to you with good news. I was forced to employ small nuclear weapons against the enemy off our shores. We destroyed a substantial number of the invading forces. Our ground forces, following the lessons learned over 200 years ago in the Revolutionary War, retired in the face of a determined enemy and our Air Forces decimated the enemy.

Lacking carrier battle groups, the enemy was unable to seriously interfere with our aircraft. The last of the invaders were destroyed this day in South Carolina. I urge all Americans to remain on alert in case any enemy forces slipped past our military. I have been in contact with the new UN and warned them that at the slightest provocation, we will launch an all out nuclear attack against their countries. I have not heard back from the UN as of this time.

The men quit listening to the radio and began to discuss the president's announcement.

"By God that's showing them," Gunny said pumping the air with his fist.

"We must have had some pretty good intelligence," Terry added.

"Last I knew," Gunny said, "We still had satellites."

"But how did they know to move the satellites to Europe and China?" Terry persisted.

"The British?" Jerry offered.

"Naw, them Brits are part of the UN," Gunny offered, "Only the 3 North American countries are part of the new NATO."

"I wouldn't be so sure," Chuck said, "There were a lot of surprises. Remember the other day when the radio was talking about the Japanese Air Force?"

"We took them out right handy," Gunny remembered. "They never made it past Alaska."

"That sort of surprised me," Chuck said, "They had American licensed fighters like the F-15J's and the F-4EJ Phantoms."

“That true enough,” Gunny allowed, “And we trained their pilots, too. Still, they weren’t fighting to protect their country like they had been trained. Our guys were; that’s what probably gave us the edge.”

“I still have a sinking feeling in my stomach,” Chuck said, “I think the government missed something.”

“Well them Eurasians sure won’t launch a nuclear exchange,” Gunny said, “Not after seeing what a few small bombs did to the US.”

“Still…” Chuck persisted, “I have a sinking feeling in my gut. We’d better stay on full alert for a few days.”

With all of the American military forces repositioned to the east and west coasts to repel the UN invasion, Chuck’s sinking feeling was right on. Osama bin Laden, brave man that he was, had remained in Indonesia. His forces were under orders to avoid contact with the Americans at all costs.

They spread out along the western third of the US, planning to target America’s electrical generation capacity. America was rebuilding. If they could take out the electrical grid, it would set back America’s efforts a decade and the Muslims could once again attack America in strength. Small teams set out to attack the hydroelectric dams and nuclear generating plants. Once in place, the teams were to wait until July 4th, the American Independence Day. Then, in a coordinated attack, they would take out all of the major generation facilities.

The Indonesian forces, guerillas that had fought from the jungles of that island nation, were resourceful and crafty. They hunkered down and waited. They listened to the reports of the UN invasion on their radios. Good, they thought, this invasion will pull the Americans away from their electrical generation facilities. WW III ended July 1st in South Carolina. Hatch left the American troops in place to clean up the bodies and recover the invaders equipment.

Thus, on the 4th of July 2002, no one was guarding the dams and nuclear generation facilities in Colorado, Arizona, California and other states, nor the large dams along the Columbia and Colorado rivers. Precisely at dawn on that date, give or take a couple of minutes, the Indonesians struck and the western third of the nation went dark. They didn’t realize this at The Ranch until the radio announced the attacks. The loss of power pulled down the entire grid.

“I knew it,” Chuck said when they heard the announcement by the ABC affiliate in Flagstaff. “Something didn’t feel right. What do we do fellas, head for Palo Verde?”

“No way,” Gunny responded. “We wait for orders. The military will be shifting assets to meet with this threat. They have a better overview than we do.”

“Just get everyone ready to move at a moment’s notice,” Gunny suggested. “And have someone standing by the military radio they gave us.”

Notice wasn’t long in coming. They received a call from the Pinal County Sheriff’s office. Chandler would guard Phoenix and the Ranch militia was to intercept the terrorists east of Palo Verde. Apparently the terrorist had destroyed the water feed lines exposing the core and killed the Palo Verde nuclear facility staff. The reactor was getting hot and was expected to melt down in a few hours.

“Aw...crap,” Chuck exclaimed. “Palo Verde is melting down and they want us to head to Palo Verde?”

“Shut up Chuck,” Gunny commanded.

“...I say again, intercept on route 85,” the Pinal County dispatcher was saying.

“We’ll setup an ambush right here,” Gunny said, “At the intersection of South 91st Avenue and West Buckeye Road. That area is fairly devoid of buildings. We’ll use the same plan as always and set up on either side of Buckeye east of the 91st Avenue intersection.”

They piled in the vehicles and headed towards the target intersection. They arrived almost a half-hour before the Indonesians. The terrorists only had 4 vehicles; the two Mark-19’s disposed of them with two bursts from each weapon. They didn’t hang around, preferring to return to The Ranch as fast as possible. Chuck notified the Maricopa County Sheriff that the terrorist’s bodies could be found at the junction of West Buckeye and 91st Ave.

The Sheriff’s office had a team, made up of workers from the other shifts at Palo Verde, on scene and were attempting to scram the reactor. It would just depend, the dispatcher said, on whether or not they could reinsert the control rods. They had a 50-50 chance of success.

At Palo Verde, the workers were suited up in protective suits. The reactor was hot, very hot, but they were able to lower a few control rods, and then more as the reactor began to cool. Meanwhile, other workers rushed to bypass the wiring to allow them to open the backup cooling system valves and add water to the reactor to further cool it. It took them 2 hours to bring the nearly runaway reactor under control. The protective suits were sufficient for the control room workers. However, the people that had to enter the reactor containment building to bypass the wiring received lethal doses of radiation; the al-Qaida terrorists had racked up more American deaths.

It was little wonder then, when the local militias caught up with the terrorists around the western states that many of them suffered slow, painful deaths; sometimes lasting over a period of days. America had had enough. Make the SOB’s pay was upper most in the minds of the local militias.

Meanwhile, back at The Ranch, Chuck monitored the background radiation. It rose ever so slightly, but the containment buildings at Palo Verde had done what they were intended to do, contain the radiation, or most of it. Faced with no other options, the Palo Verde crews had vented the one containment building a single time. The emergency was over.

The new UN, after a heated debate that raged for days, decided not to test the resolve of the Americans any further. They counted themselves fortunate that the American President had not launched an all out attack against Eurasia. The French were outraged at the decision, especially when the British told the Security Council that anyone with half a brain would not have taken on the Americans. France immediately declared war on Great Britain for the umpteenth time. All of the other countries decided to remain neutral; surely Great Britain would put the frogs in their place, again.

In Indonesia, Osama got the news of the successes of his raiders. The loss of American life was not great, but the damage to the American infrastructure would most certainly slow down the American's rebuilding efforts. He looked around trying to decide which group of Muslims would willingly sacrifice themselves for his cause. Perhaps the Nubians, as they now called themselves, he thought; would they be willing to attack America? The population of the world seemed to be dropping rapidly. The only significant population growth was in North and South America.

al-Qaida – Chapter 16 – Paris by Moonlight

“Mr. President,” the man said, “This is Tony Blair.”

“Who?” Hatch asked.

“Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Great Britain,” Blair answered.

“What happened to John Majors?” Hatch asked.

“Voted out on a vote of no confidence,” Blair answered, “Happened years ago. By the way, France declared war on us.”

“You’re at war with France?” Hatch said, “When did that happen?”

“After we told them that anyone with half a brain wouldn’t have attacked America,” Blair replied.

“So, Tony is it?” Hatch answered, “What can I do for you?”

“I...we...Great Britain, that is, would appreciate the help of the United States in our war with France,” Blair announced, “You know that we refused to participate in the UN war against America, do you not? Anyway, none of the other members of the UN will help us; they’ve all declared themselves to be neutral.”

“Well, I’ll tell you Tony,” Hatch responded, “The US is in pretty tough shape itself. First al-Qaida exploded all of those nukes; then, the Muslims tried to invade us through Canada and Mexico; then the UN invaded; finally, al-Qaida hit us again. I’m afraid that you’re going to have to go this one alone.”

“Isn’t there anything I can say Mr. President to get you to change your mind?” Blair pleaded.

“Afraid not, Tony,” Hatch replied, suppressing his laugh, “But say, we have a bunch of ships in reserve that we’d be glad to sell you, if that would work out.”

“Sort of like the lend-lease deal before WW II?” Blair asked.

“No Tony, it would be a straight out sale,” Hatch said, “But I can give you a hell of a price on them.”

“Uh...I’m afraid that we can’t afford to buy any ships, Mr. President,” Blair reluctantly admitted.

“What do you mean you can’t afford to buy ships?” Hatch remarked, “You’ve been trading with every country in the world except the US. You should have plenty of money.”

“We do,” Blair admitted, “But with France at war with us, our access to oil has fallen off terribly. We’re being forced to buy from the Argentinians.”

“That’s the bunch you went to war with over those islands wasn’t it? The Falklands, I believe you call them,” Hatch said.

“Yes, and they’re holding us up on the price of oil,” Blair announced.

“Payback is a bitch, isn’t it Tony?” Hatch thought. “I sure wish that there were more that we could do Tony, what with you being a part of NATO and all,” Hatch said. “I’ll tell you what, if they invade England, you let me know and we’ll drop a nuke on Paris for you. Like I said, we can give you one hell of a deal on those ships, keep that in mind.”

“Thanks Mr. President, I will,” Blair responded. “I’ll let you know if they invade us.”

“It been nice talking to you Tony, you keep in touch,” Hatch said and hung up the phone.

Hatch buzzed his secretary. “Tell the Vice-President that I want to see him in my office,” he said.

“Yes sir,” She replied.

A few minutes later Vice President Jon Kyl entered the oval office.

“Yes Mr. President?” Kyl said, “Need something?”

“I just had a call from the British Prime minister, Tony Blair,” Hatch replied.

“Oh, what did he want?” the VP asked.

“Wants us to back them in their war with France,” Hatch responded.

“What did you tell him?” Kyl inquired.

“Told him we couldn’t,” Hatch replied, “But I offered to sell them those old destroyers we have in reserve. He said England was buying oil from Argentina and couldn’t afford them. I figure it’s just a matter of time before those frogs invade England, so I offered to Nuke Paris for him when they do.”

“We should get a satellite over France,” Kyl replied, “I’d like to be watching when we do. Those damn Frenchmen have slapped the US in the face twice. That crap they pulled after WW II under DeGaulle has always stuck in my craw. And you know as well as I do that if we had ever decided to go to war with Iraq a second time to take out Saddam, they would have opposed it.”

“Oh probably,” Hatch admitted. “I’ll let you know when the light show is going to begin. I figure it will be a couple of weeks.”

“ABC News is saying that France and England are at war,” Jerry reported.

“Again?” Chuck laughed. “Who started it this time?”

“I understood the announcer to say that France declared war on Great Britain first,” Jerry said.

“Britain will kick their butts,” Gunny suggested.

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” Chuck responded. “Say what do you guys think of this work release program the President is pushing through Congress?”

“I think he is asking for trouble,” Terry offered, “They ought to leave those SOB’s in prison, if you ask me. Mark my words, it will go great for a while, and then, they’ll turn on the military and sack the country.”

“I agree with Terry for once,” Jerry said, “If they only released the non-violent offenders, it might work; but he wants to release everyone except those convicted of murder.”

“I’ve never trusted the guy,” Chuck said, “Even after he gave us those pardons; I can’t believe that any politician is as squeaky clean as Hatch appears to be.”

“The idea of having, what, a couple of thousand inmates running around Phoenix supposedly cleaning the place up doesn’t sit well with me either,” Gunny said. “I think that we’d better keep our militia on alert.”

A similar discussion was taking place at Chandler at the same time. Roy Johnson was telling his people that Hatch’s plan was a bomb waiting to explode. He suggested that they get together with Chuck’s people up at The Ranch and work out contingency plans for when it blew up in the President’s face. He put in a radio call to the Maricopa County Sheriff, the Pinal County Sheriff and to Chuck. Could they all get together at the Ranch the next day he asked?

Wednesday, October 3, 2002, the two Sheriffs and the Chandlerites met with The Ranchers at The Ranch around 10am. The Sheriffs both expressed a high level of concern. They didn’t believe that 4 Platoons of regular Army were enough troops to keep a lid on things. Vandenberg was angry and nothing short of terrified. The Army should have 4 Companies of soldiers, he insisted, not 4 Platoons. Even if the Chandlerites and The Ranchers pitched in along with the Pinal County Sheriff, they would be outnumbered better than 3 to 1.

“I put in a call to Kyl,” Vandenberg said. “He said he’d talk to the President and see if

the Army could send in more troops. But, between you and me, he didn't sound like he expected the President to go along with the request."

"What did you expect?" Chuck asked, "Kyl is a lawyer and a politician."

"True," Vandenberg agreed, "But he is an Arizona lawyer and politician. And, he was a Republican before everyone became an independent. He's always had a reputation for being tough on crime and criminals."

"Then you can bet that he was opposed to Hatch's fruitcake idea from the git-go," Chuck summarized. "You said that he didn't sound like he expected the President to go along. You can take that to the bank. It won't change until it all blows up in the President's face. Then, we'll probably have to step in and clean up the President's mess."

"Or the President," Jerry muttered under his breath.

"What was that Jerry?" Chuck asked.

"Oh, nothing," Jerry said loud enough for everyone to hear.

Chandler and The Ranch stayed on full alert, ready to response to the Maricopa County's eventual call for help. Each group decided, totally independent of the others that they wouldn't take any prisoners if they had to respond. Tick...tick...tick...

Had it been earlier in the year, the prisoners probably would have revolted sooner. All it took was for a green Army newbie, a young black man, to push a white man, a member of the Aryan Brotherhood, a little too far. The prisoners did, indeed, explode. They over powered the Platoon that was guarding them and then the Maricopa County Deputy's who first responded to the scene. Vandenberg was on the radio the moment he got the call from Joe Arpaio.

The Chandlerites arrived on scene first. They were able to encircle the rioting prisoners and began to pick them off one-by-one. The ranchers arrived a few minutes later and Gunny told the two Mark-19 gunners to open fire and, "Blow the SOBs to Hell!" Johnson had held back from using his Mark-19s, but when The Ranchers opened up, so did his gunners. A few minutes later, about 500 prisoners, late of the Arizona Correctional Facility located west of Phoenix, lay dead or dying on the ground. In an act of charity, The Ranchers made the rounds putting the living prisoners out of their misery.

The three remaining Platoons, assisted by The Ranchers, Chandlerites and the deputy Sheriffs from both counties loaded the remaining 1,500 prisoners onto busses and hauled them back to the Arizona Correctional Facility where they were placed on lock-down.

Hatch was in more than one pickle. There was the blowup in Phoenix. And, the French had invaded Great Britain. He kept his word and called the Vice President to his office.

They both watched a satellite feed as a 1.2-megaton nuke, the largest in the American arsenal, exploded over the city of Paris, France.

A smile on his face, the VP then informed the President that he best pull his head out of where the sun didn't shine and lock up those prisoners before all hell broke loose in the country. Hatch issued the order. The prisoners didn't like the order. All hell broke loose when the Army tried to load the prisoners onto busses for transport back to the prisons. The Army and Marines eventually prevailed and the remaining prisoners, only about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the original number, were returned to their prison cells and placed on lockdown.

As they sat of the front porch on October 28th, Chuck was wondering, "What next?" Earlier in the day, ABC News had announced that the last of the prisoners had been returned to lockup; those that survived, that is. The UN had announced that it was sending troops to Paris to help the French cleanup after the nuclear attack on that historical city. The British were being blamed and their membership in the UN had been revoked. The Russians said that, "As soon as we have proof that the British launched the attack, we intend to nuke London." Prime Minister Tony Blair resigned his seat as a Prime Minister.

The election of 2002 saw many of the former Democrats and Republicans turned independents failing to be re-elected to the House and Senate. The Populist Party was making big inroads into political scene. After the swearing in ceremony in January, the Populists introduced several Amendments to the US Constitution, one that would allow a citizen of the US who was not born in the US to be eligible for election to the office of President and Vice President. Governor Swartzenegger was reelected as Governor of California. Roy Johnson ran on the Populist ticket and won a seat as an Arizona Representative.

Primarily farmers had supported the Populist Party, which dated back to 1892. With the nation returning to an agrarian economy, the Populist Party rose from the ashes like the legendary Phoenix. The Amendment to allow a non-US born citizen to become President was a sharp departure from the platform of 100+ years earlier. No doubt it resulted from the popularity of the California Governor. And having experienced the graduated income tax, the new Populists eliminated all reference to it from its revised platform.

President Hatch was beside himself over the Populist Party Platform plank that would limit the President to a single term. When the state legislatures ratified all of the Amendments introduced by the Populists, Vice President Kyl switched party allegiances to the Populist Party. He wanted his chance in the sun, even if it were for a single term.

Despite the urging of his comrades, Chuck steadfastly refused to run for office on the Populist or any other ticket. The mere thought of being in a room with so many lawyers made him ill. Besides, Roy being in the house put him close enough to the Congress. He wanted to stay home and raise his son and daughter in peace. If peace were ever given a chance, that is.

The ranch had turned into a small community. Very small, but it suited him. The herds were getting bigger every year. They were growing all of the crops they needed and had their own orchard. The five of them, Jose, Gunny, Terry, Jerry and himself had formed a clique of sorts. Gunny's new daughter, named Susan Rose Shirley, man it must be weird having 3 first names, was the apple of her father's eye. It was downright funny seeing the tough old Marine slobbering over his daughter rather than the other way around. Did the Gunny actually have a heart? His wife Rose seemed to think so.

"Hey Gunny, grab yourself a beer," Chuck said as Gunny flopped his frame down into an empty chair.

"I'll pass Chuck," Gunny said, "Rose doesn't like me drinking so much."

"It doesn't seem so long ago that I had the same problem," Chuck laughed, "Susan lets me have a maximum of 2 beers a day, but anymore, I probably don't drink 3 bottles a week. Dang stuff makes you fat."

"Been to the range lately?" Gunny asked.

"Not for a few days, why?" Chuck asked, puzzled.

"Just wondering," Gunny said, "It seems like a lot of the folks are passing on their range time."

"Susan and I were on the range 6 days ago," Chuck defended himself, "And it's still a draw. We're both shooting $\frac{3}{4}$ " groups most of the time. I'll have to admit though, she better on the Barrett M82A1M than I am. What is it you're concerned about?"

"That last action we saw was all Mark-19s," Gunny said. "The only actual shooting was people doing head shots from 3' away. I think our people are getting rusty. You never know when those shooting skills are going to be needed. Every time we solve one problem, another pops up. Not counting the a-bombs, this country has had 2 wars, 2 terrorist invasions and those riots with the cons."

"Who is left to invade us?" Chuck asked. "The Muslims have been pretty much wiped out between the war and putting down the terrorists. The Eurasians won't give us a second look for a couple of generations. Who would even consider such a thing?"

"That SOB bin Laden is still alive as far as we know." Gunny said, "Then there's the Africans, excuse me Nubians, and South America."

"Hell Gunny," Chuck said, "They wiped out half the country and we still repelled 2 invasions. The country is an armed camp now that the liberals have been put in their place. It's a lot safer, too. The crime rate is so low that they quit keeping statistics."

"Maybe so, Chuck," Gunny agreed, "But that's still no reason for us not to keep up our

skills.”

“If it will make you happy,” Chuck replied, “I’ll implement a signoff system. Everyone will be required to have an instructor sign off on their range time once a week.”

“That would make me a happy man Chuck. Say, I’ll take that beer now,” Gunny laughed.

“What say the 5 of us make a trip up to Roosevelt Dam and do a little fishing?” Chuck asked when he returned with the beer.

“I ain’t much of a fisherman Chuck,” Gunny smiled, “But it will give me a break from Rose and I can down a couple of beers without feeling guilty.”

“I’ll talk to the others and see what they think about it,” Chuck offered.

After confirming that his wife approved of the trip, Chuck talked to the others. The next morning the five men set off in a Tahoe with their camping gear tied on top and the back of the Tahoe filled with beer. They drove to Roosevelt Lake and set up camp.

They didn’t have very good luck fishing, but going fishing was just an excuse to get away from the daily regimen of The Ranch. They didn’t have to scavenge any more, the bad guys were few and far between, and The Ranch pretty much ran itself. Randy was in charge of the farming operations including the gardens. Whether the men wanted to admit it or not, they were just plain bored. They ran out of beer and decided the fishing trip was over.

“Hi honey,” Chuck greeted Susan as he entered the house.

“Have a good time fishing?” Susan asked.

“Fair,” Chuck replied.

“Did you men bring any beer back?” she laughed.

“Uh...no,” he admitted.

“Be honest, you guys didn’t really go fishing as much as you went to get away from The Ranch,” she pressed, “True or False?”

“Uh...true,” he said.

“Face it Chuck, the five of you are bored silly,” Susan announced. “Maria, Rose, Lynn, Helen and I have been visiting. We all agree, you fellas need to take a road trip or something.”

"I'm perfectly happy..." he began.

"Bull and you know it," Susan said.

"But Susan," Chuck protested.

"Don't but Susan me," Susan said sharply, "Besides, it's all decided."

"What's all decided?" he asked.

"That the five of you are going to take a road trip," she announced.

"Umm...where are we going?" he asked wrapping his arms around her.

"Rose says that Gunny keeps talking about Pendleton," she replied, "Helen says Jerry wants to see Palm Springs. Maria says that Jose is worried about his brother in Pomona. Lynn and I don't know about you and Terry."

"It sounds like we ought to go to California," he responded. "But I don't know about Pendleton, bombs went off north and south of there."

"Rose thinks that's what has Gunny worried," she remarked, "He had so many friends at Pendleton."

"Funny he's never said anything to me. None of them has," Chuck observed. "But, to tell the truth, I'd like to get back to Edwards," Chuck admitted. "I doubt if any of the people I knew are still there, but I'd like to see the place again. The problem is that if Pendleton and Edwards are still there they'll be locked up tight and Gunny and I won't be able to get in."

"Lynn got a hold of Roy and he talked to the VP," she said handing him an envelope, "Here are your clearances. The 5 of you are making an inspection trip for Jon Kyl."

"And, when have you women arranged for us to leave?" Chuck laughed.

"The sooner you go, the sooner you'll be back," Susan smiled. "The other wives are talking to their husband's right about now. Why don't you take a six pack and wait for them on the front porch, I'm sure they'll be right over."

"Anything else I need to know?" he asked.

"We had two of the Tahoes serviced and long range fuel tanks installed," Susan continued, "Kyl arranged for the military to provide you with fuel when you get there. Everything is in the envelope. And, I've packed your bag and the MP5's and your side arms are in the vehicles."

“It sounds to me like you women are trying to get rid of us,” Chuck shook his head.

“We’re just trying to get the 5 of you back to your old selves,” Susan insisted. “The 5 of you have been mopping around for months.”

“I’ll be on the front porch,” he said giving Susan a hug and tender kiss.

“See,” she said, “It working already.”

Over the course of the next ten minutes the other four appeared, each shaking his head and carrying an envelope. He handed them beers as they arrived.

“What time are we leaving tomorrow?” Chuck asked.

al-Qaida – Chapter 17 – Peoples Republic of California

The two Tahoes left for the PRK at 7 am. Gunny, Jose and Chuck were in the lead vehicle. They made the drive to Blythe in 3½ hours. Chuck was prepared for a challenge at the Agricultural inspection station at Blythe. Entering California had always been so irritating. Cars with California plates were given a cursory glance; the standard ‘any fruits or vegetables’ question asked; the standard answer, ‘no’ given whether it were true or not, and the vehicle was waived on.

Foreigners, e.g., cars with non-California plates, were sometimes grilled and their vehicles searched. Chuck figured that California had turned the inspection station into a border guard station as had been done in the 1930’s. To his surprise, the station was vacant and in obvious disrepair.

In Indio, they got off I-10 and picked up state route 111 so they could enter Palm Springs from the back way. Chuck let Jerry and Terry pass them and lead the way since he didn’t have any idea what Jerry wanted to see in Palm Springs. They never got off 111 and barely slowed as they drove through Palm Springs. Before he realized where they were, they had passed through Palm Springs and were back at an I-10 junction. Chuck honked his horn signaling a halt.

“I thought that you wanted to see Palm Springs,” Chuck said to Jerry.

“I did,” Jerry replied, “Just wanted to see how the hoity-toity rich Californians lived. I saw it. No big deal.”

“As long as we’re stopped, let’s eat,” Gunny suggested. They pulled out the sandwiches their wives had prepared, got a cold beer from the cooler and had lunch.

“I expected to see a lot of people in Palm Springs,” Chuck commented. “They have all these wind turbines, water and plenty of golf courses they could turn into farms.”

“I can picture it now, Bob Hope out on a golf course with a hoe in his hands instead of a golf club,” Terry laughed.

Had they not skirted the northern edge of the city, they would have seen dozens of people on the golf courses turned farms. Many of the original residents of Palm Springs were dead, but the city had turned into an oasis of survival. Residents of Los Angeles, fleeing the ruined city had flocked to the area and established a settlement of a few thousand people. They had fought dozens of battles keeping the riff-raff from LA out of the community. The battle-hardened residents of Palm Springs didn’t take to strangers; the fellas were lucky they hadn’t strayed into the city.

Chuck took the lead after lunch and they drove to Pomona. After hours of searching, they located Jose’s brother, sister-in-law and their children in a settlement not unlike The Ranch or Chandler. Jose’s brother Jorge invited them to spend the night. Jorge re-

counted the struggle the people in the Pomona area had endured after the bomb had gone off in LA. It had been tough at first because they had only a few hunting rifles and shotguns to fend off the looters and trash from the city. When they finally succeeded, they had amassed a considerable arsenal of military style weapons.

Apparently the only people in California without assault rifles and serious weapons were the law-abiding citizens. Then, when they had successfully repelled the onslaught, the ATF showed up. At first the ATF demanded the NFA weapons, searching houses and arresting citizens. Then, the ATF began to demand all weapons. It had taken them only days, Jorge said, to realize that they needed to conceal their weapons from the ATF. The more the ATF searched, the fewer weapons they found. They were set for a major showdown with the feds when Clinton was killed. After that, the ATF left them alone. California Law Enforcement turned a blind eye to the armed resident's of Pomona and they began to build a new life.

Jose and Jorge visited late into the night. Chuck and the others gave up and went to bed somewhere before Jorge began recounting WW III. The next morning, Jorge's wife Connie prepared a large breakfast and they ate their fill. Jorge and Jose were sleeping, having talked until nearly dawn. Connie filled them in on the parts Jorge had glossed over; the struggle to grow food; the epidemic that raged. The epidemics began in LA and San Francisco and spread across much of southern and central California.

The lack of potable water and poor sanitation led to outbreaks of Typhoid and Cholera. Depending on the diagnosis, treatment was tetracycline, Cipro and tetracycline plus fluid and electrolyte replacement with Gatorade G2 powder. Only the intervention of the military cleaning up the water supply and the closing of the communities to outsiders had prevented the spread of the diseases to many communities. Apparently Phoenix had been spared those problems, probably because of the relocation center.

They laid over for a day in Pomona. Jorge gave them a tour of the settlement. It differed little from the settlement at Chandler, except in size, Pomona being a far larger community. Pomona got its electricity from the wind turbines at Palm Springs. They had their own militia, over 2,000 strong. Gunny pointed out the abundance of MP5SD's; either the resident's had fought the ATF and won a few battles, or they had seized upon the ATF's demise to arm themselves.

It hadn't been anything like that Jorge corrected Gunny. The Army had stored the ATF's weapons and equipment at a local National Guard Armory when they arrested the ATF agents. When WW III occurred, the Army had pulled the troops guarding the armory and they had helped themselves. Jose invited Jorge to The Ranch and Jorge invited Jose to Pomona. Both men were happy with their present circumstances and neither wanted to move. The men decided to drive on to Pendleton the following morning.

They left for Pendleton early, traveling south on the 57 freeway until it joined up with I-5. They traveled south on I-5 to Pendleton. The document supplied by the VP got them in to see the Commanding Officer of Camp Pendleton. The Commander, a Major General,

had been a Lt. Col. stationed at Pendleton at the same time as Gunny.

“Gunny Shirley, what brings you here, you old war horse?” the General inquired. “And what’s this inspection trip for the VP all about?”

“Sir, I’ll tell you but you may not believe it,” Gunny smiled. “Our wives decided that we needed to get away from The Ranch we live on over near Phoenix,” Gunny began, “One of them called our local Representative and he called VP Kyl and the VP fixed up those letters to get us past base security. We aren’t inspecting anything. I just wanted to look up some old friends.”

“That’s a relief,” the General said, “I thought maybe something was going down I didn’t know about. Who are your friends?”

“That fella over there is retired Master Sergeant Charles Tunis, late of the US Air Force,” Gunny nodded to Chuck. “You may not remember Chuck, but you met him about 12 or 13 years ago. He was on TDY down here and I taught him how to use a M72 LAW.”

The General gave Chuck a long hard stare. “I remember you Sergeant,” he said, “As I recall you were also quite a marksman.”

“He still is General,” Gunny laughed. “And his wife is a better shot than he is.”

Gunny proceeded to introduce Jerry, Terry and Jose, giving the General a small peek at their backgrounds.

“Quite a few of those recruits you put through their paces are stationed here as Gunnery Sergeants these days,” the General commented. “Most of the Gunnery Sergeants you served with have long since retired; all except Gunny Roberts, who is my Sergeant Major. How about I get a hold of Roberts and have him set up something at the NCO Club for this evening?”

“That would be great Sir,” Gunny responded.

“In the meantime, how about you join me in the Officer’s Mess?” the General offered, “It’s lunch time and I could sure stand a bite.”

“Thank you Sir, we’d be delighted,” Gunny smiled, “I always wanted to see if you Officers ate better than we enlisted men.”

The General told his secretary to contact Sergeant Major Roberts and set up a reunion at the NCO Club for that evening. He then led the men to the officer’s mess. Gunny was surprised to learn that the Officers ate the same food as the enlisted men; stewards served the officers at their tables; and the food had a lot of fancy garnishes and was perhaps prepared a little more carefully, but it was the same food he’d eaten for 30

years. Somehow, though, he couldn't imagine the General eating SOS.

After lunch, the General had a Gunnery Sergeant give the men a tour of the base. Little had changed and Gunny pointed out sites that he remembered. The Sergeant pointed out where they had filmed *Heartbreak Ridge* and other movies there at Pendleton. Eventually, Gunny said, "Don't I know you?"

The Gunnery Sergeant said, "You probably don't remember me Gunny, although at the time, I prayed every night that you wouldn't, even if it were for an hour."

Gunny looked at the nameplate and thought a minute. "Do you still have 2 left feet?"

"Not for a long time," the Sergeant laughed, "You cured me of that."

"Did you ever learn to shoot a rifle?" Gunny smiled.

"Let's go over to the range and I'll teach YOU how to shoot," the Gunny smiled.

When they arrived at the range, the Sergeant led them over to an armory and drew an M-25 Springfield M1A.

"This is the M25 White Feather Tactical/Carlos Hathcock model M1A," he said, "Which utilizes the Springfield Armory threaded, rear-lugged receiver, M-14 magazine, Low-Profile Custom Muzzle Break/Stabilizer and a Krieger Carbon Heavy Match Barrel with a 1:10 twist. This is a pre-production model. In a special arrangement with the estate and family of Carlos Hathcock, each M25 White Feather receiver is engraved with likeness of Carlos Hathcock's signature, along with the White Feather logo. Shall we go to the 800 meter range?"

"800 meters?" Gunny choked. "Chuck you'd better do the shooting. I'm not that good."

They went to the 800-meter range and the young Gunnery Sergeant demonstrated what he claimed was average for him, shooting a group of about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a MOA. Chuck took the rifle fired 3 shots to verify the point of aim and then fired a string of 10 shots which grouped slightly under $\frac{1}{2}$ of a MOA. "Darn nice rifle," Chuck thought, "Nice rifle Gunny," he said handing the M-25 back to the shocked young Gunnery Sergeant, "But I prefer my M-24 Remington."

"You're a pretty fair shot Sir," the young Gunny said.

"Not as good as my wife," Chuck laughed.

"You still have two left feet Sergeant," Gunny laughed. "Even the General knows how good of a shot Chuck is. You've just been had by the Air Force. See you at the reunion party tonight?"

“Uh...sure Gunny,” the contrite Gunnery Sergeant said.

They ate dinner in the NCO mess that evening, making sure to coat their stomachs for what they presumed would be a night of heavy drinking. Gunny introduced his companions to Sgt. Major Roberts and they listened as the two exchanged war stories. Surprisingly, there was little drinking that night. Older and wiser, the two Marines didn't drink like fish anymore and everyone made it through the party relatively sober. The General stopped by in civies, carrying a gun case.

“I understand that you out shot Gunnery Sergeant Robinson this afternoon,” he said.

“Afraid so General,” Chuck admitted.

“Well, I have a gift for you Master Sergeant,” the General said handing the rifle case to Chuck. “That's one of the M-25's we have in inventory. I don't know when, if ever, they will be available on the civilian market. Since you shoot it so well, I thought that you should have one.”

“Uh...thanks General,” Chuck stammered. “It's a nice rifle, but I was out shooting myself today. Couldn't let the Marines show up the Air Force.”

“Nevertheless,” the General replied, “Enjoy the rifle. Gunny, don't be a stranger. You're welcome here anytime.”

“Yes Sir,” Gunny replied.

The General took his leave and they returned to the war stories. The Sgt. Major began to describe the events of WW III as he had experienced them.

“The Navy trimmed down the Chinese fleet pretty good, especially the Los Angeles class boats. They took out a bunch of the Chinese ships, re-supplied and took out some more,” he said. “Then the carrier task groups got into the act. Apparently the Chinese never saw the movie Midway or read their history books; between the subs and the task groups, we must have taken out $\frac{3}{4}$'s of the Chinese fleet. Then, the President ordered the nukes dropped on the outlying vessels. That really took the sap out of them.

“They came ashore in waves along most of the beaches on the California coast. We put up a little resistance, and then fell back. Those Naval Aviators and the Air Force flyboys bombed the living crap out of them,” he continued. “You know, we took a lot fewer casualties than I imagined. Normally we charge in and get our butts shot off. I don't know who planned this gig, but he's one smart dude.”

“Have you heard anything from Edwards?” Chuck asked.

“Not much,” Roberts replied. “Scuttlebutt is that they have a new plane on the flight line up there, but I don't know anything about it. A lot of the Air Force flights against the Chi-

nese originated out of Edwards, you know.”

“Why?” Chuck inquired, “It a flight test center.”

“I know,” Roberts replied, “But that dry lake is the biggest airport in the country.”

When they were ready to depart the next morning, the General had an escort for them. Parts of LA were still Indian Country he said. He was sending two of those new M-1117 Armored Security Vehicles (similar to the ASV-150) to provide cover for them, at least until they cleared LA.

“I wouldn’t mind having a few of those at The Ranch,” Gunny said. “They have everything: a Ma Deuce, a Mark 19 and an M-240. We could kick some serious butt if we had some of those.”

“Kick whose butt, Gunny?” Chuck asked. “There can’t be 2 dozen terrorists alive in the world.”

Chuck was wrong, again. Osama had made it to Nubia, specifically to the Sudan. A hotbed of Islamic revolutionaries, he found ready recruits for his next attack on the Americans. The Sudanese weren’t suicidal. They were willing to spend months, if it took that long, to learn English and learn to behave like the Afro-Americans that inhabited Los Angeles. If they could blend in, they could foment a mini-revolution from within. The Americans would never suspect the Muslims of another attack.

The escort vehicles dropped off at Santa Clarita to return to Pendleton. They made the 1½-hour drive to Edwards and waited at the security gate on Rosamond Blvd. An Air Police escort came to lead them to the Commanding Officer’s office. The Commanding General was Brigadier General Irving Branch, Jr., the son of the former Commander of the AFFTC who had been killed in an airplane crash in the Rockies in 1966.

General Branch had the same questions about their visit as had his counterpart at Pendleton. Chuck explained the purpose of their visit and the General, faced with the Vice Presidential order, gave them free run of the base, provided they were escorted, that is. Chuck led the way and the 1st Lieutenant escort rode with Heckle and Jeckle in the second Tahoe. Chuck showed them the NASA facilities at what had once been North Edwards and then led them to the flight line.

Sitting there on the flight line was an aircraft Chuck thought he’d never see again. It strongly resembled the SR-71, but was smaller. Gunny was staring at the aircraft, he’d never seen anything like it. Chuck smiled inwardly, so they’d finally worked out the bugs and gotten the thing to work.

“Is that...?” Gunny started to ask.

Chuck nodded his head slightly. He didn’t know how strong the secrecy was concerning

the mach 6 aircraft and he really didn't want to find out, Vice Presidential orders or not. He leaned over to Gunny and whispered into his ear, "Later."

He showed them the barracks where he'd lived and they stopped at the NCO Mess Hall for lunch. They then drove over to the NCO Club and had a beer.

"Did you see all of the aircraft parked on the lake?" Gunny asked. "Must have been half the damn Air Force."

Chuck related a story he'd been told about what it had been like at Edwards during the Cuban Missile Crisis back in 1962. According to one old Master Sergeant, the troops had gone to work that morning not knowing of the brewing crisis. Around 0900, they had all been told to listen to the radio, President Kennedy was going to make an announcement. They listened spell bound as Kennedy outlined the presence of missiles on Cuban soil.

Over the course of the day, several B-47's, armed with nuclear weapons flew in and parked at a hastily arranged shotgun area near the western end of the main runway. Damned near every airman stationed at Edwards that night was busy doing laundry and packing their duffel bags, the Sgt. had said. It was the most frightening experience he'd ever had during the cold war.

When Chuck finished relating his story, they mounted up and departed Edwards via the north gate, dropping off the Lieutenant at the Guard Shack. They headed east on highway 58, heading for Barstow to pick up I-15 and return to Pomona so Jose could visit some more with his brother.

"So tell me about the airplane Chuck," Gunny finally insisted.

"I worked on the avionics on the first prototype that they had at Nellis, you know-Area 51- back in 1989," Chuck explained. "They had more problems with that aircraft than you can imagine. Lockheed didn't have Kelly Johnson to help debug the thing; he died in 1990. Anyway, they were still test flying it when al-Qaida nuked the US. I figured that they had stopped development of the thing.

"It flies at mach 6 at 125,000 feet, and is very stealthy. It's strictly a recon bird. The problems they had with it are the reasons they brought the SR-71 out of retirement, I presume. Like I said, I was only in on the very earliest stages of its development. But, it was black within black so I couldn't talk about it. Still can't really."

"This has been quite the trip Chuck," Gunny said. "I'm glad the women kicked our butts out for a while. Got to look up some old friends; you got yourself a fancy new rifle; and, I finally got to see what you'd been keeping secret all these years."

"I'll have to tell Susan as much as I told the two of you," Chuck said, "But please don't breathe a word of this to anyone. Back in the 1960's they locked up a Major at Edwards

who took a picture of the A-12. Hell, he was on the flight line every day and could look all he wanted. But he snuck up to the fuel storage above the flight line to get a picture for his scrapbook and ended up locked up. Enough said?”

They arrived in Pomona during the early afternoon. Jose spent some time with Jorge and they departed for The Ranch the first thing the next morning.

al-Qaida – Chapter 18 – Preparations

Osama bin Laden's money was beginning to run out. He had avoided losing it all by transferring the bulk of it to Switzerland. Had he left it the Saudi banks he would have been reduced to poverty; because the Saudi's had declared him to be a criminal, he moved his money. He had still had a network of supporters in Saudi Arabia; right up until the Israelis bombed the capital. The Eurasians were now violating his country and all of the Middle East. When he finished with the Americans, he would attack them next.

The Sudanese proved to be harder to convince than he had expected. They had followed the scattered news reports and knew of his successes and failures against the Americans. His first attack against the US had been a major success, but his second had ended in failure, in their minds. The dams which al-Qaida had destroyed produced little of the Americans electricity. The rapid response of the local American militias had prevented the destruction of all of the reactors except for the reactor near Denver. The one in Arizona almost melted down. Most of the damage to the other reactors had been superficial and although they went down, President Hatch had ordered a maximum effort and all were back online within weeks.

Eventually, bin Laden had convinced the Sudanese to attack the US. He didn't know if it was due to their Muslim fervor or the \$200 Million they had insisted on for weapon and living expenses, but he had his Mujahedeen and they set about to implement his plan to infiltrate the black gangs of America. It proved easy to dress the young Sudanese to look like the Americans. But the black Americans spoke their own language and despite his best efforts, the Sudanese couldn't master the trash talk and gutter language of the Americans.

When they arrived at The Ranch, the men's mood had changed dramatically. Their journey had been a real eye opener and they realized how fortunate they were in the Phoenix area. Arizona and many areas away from the nuked cities had avoided the epidemics that had hit the areas adjacent to those cities. And the elimination of the domestic enemies, Clinton, the ATF, and Inouye's clamping down on FEMA had prevented the US from collapsing from within. The men were now more appreciative of what they had.

"How was the trip?" Susan beamed, hugging Chuck and planting a kiss on his lips.

"Outstanding," Chuck replied, "I'll never be bored with ranch life again."

"Never is a mighty long time Chuck," she laughed, "Tell me about the trip."

Chuck related the 30-minute visit to Palm Springs, the visit with Jorge and Connie and the trip to Camp Pendleton. He sat the rifle case on the kitchen table and opened it. Susan's eyes became large when she saw the White Feather.

"You're going to let me shoot that, aren't you?" she asked.

“Actually,” he said, “I like my M-24 better Susan, you can have the rifle.”

Susan squealed with delight. She examined the rifle carefully, noting that the stock permitted her to adjust the fit to suit her exactly. She then put the rifle carefully back in the case and led Chuck...

That evening, the five men were gathered on the front porch just relaxing from their homecoming festivities.

“I’d sure like to get my hands on some of those M-1117’s” Gunny said.

“I don’t know how you’re going to manage that Gunny,” Chuck laughed, “You heard the General say that they were new additions to their vehicle inventory.”

“True,” Gunny said, “But I got one of those MP’s aside and found out that the vehicle is specifically designed for Military Police use. It’s not like it’s a combat vehicle. I think I’ll plant a bug in Roy’s ear and see if he can shake a couple loose for us.”

“We do have to submit a report to the VP about our trip,” Chuck added, “We can make a big deal about how ideally suited the vehicles are for community defense.”

“That may not work,” Gunny said, “In civilian hands they’d have render the automatic weapons semi-automatic. Our government has always been prohibited by the Posse Comitatus Act from using military weaponry upon American citizens.”

“Gunny, it wouldn’t be the government using the weapons in the first place,” Chuck retorted, “And, in the second place, we wouldn’t be using them on American citizens anyway. Besides, everything’s changed in the past 5 years.”

“I agree with the first part,” Gunny stated, “But I wouldn’t be so certain about the second part. The Marines who escorted us to Santa Clarita were prepared to use the weapons against American citizens.”

“Do what you think is right Gunny,” Chuck said, “And, good luck.”

At least the phone system was up. After the terrorist attack five years before, Clinton had nationalized the telephone service and communications were restored. Gunny called Roy Johnson and outlined the need for the M-1117’s. Roy tacked an amendment onto a spending bill and a piece of special interest legislation became law.

The amendment contained a provision specifically excluding the vehicles from Posse Comitatus; and, provided for the issuance of two M-1117’s to each Arizona settlement on a 20 year, \$1 lease. Once the bill became law, Roy contacted the VP and had him lend the weight of his office to the leasing of the vehicles. The report submitted by the five ranch residents to the VP had duly noted the promise the vehicles held for the local militias and the VP was on the phone arranging for the leases right after he got off the

phone with Roy. (Kyl intended to win Arizona in the 2004 elections)

In due course, the M-1117's were delivered to the Arizona settlements. To say that the military was less than pleased with the situation would be an understatement. When he received the vehicles, Gunny revised the defenses at The Ranch. All of the old M-2's and Mark-19's were made a part of the permanent defenses. Any future militia actions would be conducted using the two M-1117's. Not that he expected that there would be any future militia actions.

After months of preparation, the Sudanese were finally ready to move against the US. Brother Osama had been provided with a personal guard to protect him against anyone who would harm him. In truth, the Sudanese were less than certain that the action against the US would succeed. Were it to fail, the personal guard had orders to literally crucify bin Laden. They secretly built a wooden cross and fashioned nails for what they presumed to be the inevitable.

The Sudanese force was small, less than 200 men. They crammed aboard a cargo vessel and set sail from the east coast of Nubia to cross the Indian and Pacific oceans. The old cargo vessel could barely make 8 knots and they stopped in Indonesia weeks later to refuel. After taking on fuel and fresh foodstuffs, the voyage continued to the US. They made landfall north of Los Angeles in the Goleta area. The old cargo ship had begun to take on water and they were barely clear of the vessel when it sank. The Sudanese worked their way down the coast to Los Angeles and began to blend in with the black gangs formerly from South Central and more recently of the San Fernando Valley.

One has to understand the mentality of the American gangsters. They were criminals, to be sure. They didn't care who they preyed on, white, black, Hispanic and Orientals all became victims of their need to survive and their greed. On the other hand, they were American gangsters. The Sudanese stuck out like a sore thumb because of their inability to speak the language of the gangs. At first, the gangsters listened to the Sudanese as they outlined their plans to attack American settlements across the country. The Sudanese seemed more interested in killing Americans, however, than stealing their possessions.

When it finally occurred to the gangsters that they were being had, they disposed of the Sudanese. When the radio reports stopped flowing from Los Angeles to the Sudan, bin Laden's personal guard drug the huge man kicking and screaming to the large wooden cross where they tied him down and then nailed his hands and feet. Unlike the Romans of 2,000 years earlier, the Sudanese didn't do anything to hasten bin Laden's journey to Paradise. They didn't pierce his side with a spear; neither did they break his legs. It took Osama bin Laden a most unpleasant 3 days to die, eventually dying more of thirst than of anything else.

With the demise of bin Laden, the terrorist threat to the US finally came to an end. However, the Sudanese had planted an idea in the minds of the gangsters of Los Angeles. And, the American gangsters were nothing, if not survivors. They had attacked places

like Pomona, but they always withdrew rather than risking heavy casualties. They had learned to avoid the military like the plague.

Even when the Army and Marines swept their cities, they faded away avoiding contact. They easily blended in with the folks of the San Fernando Valley, especially considering their considerable assets in areas like Pacoima. Over the years they had even established their own radio network crisscrossing the US and connecting them with like-minded groups that had managed to survive.

Word of bin Laden's death never reached the outside world and the world held its collective breath waiting for him to strike again. That fear included not only the Americans, but the Eurasians as well. Surely bin Laden would be offended at the Eurasian's seizure of the lands of the oil rich Middle East. With the war between England and France at an end, the British resigned from NATO and once more sought membership in the UN. Purchasing oil from Argentina had all but bankrupted the country. The UN relented and allowed Great Britain to rejoin; by this time, Germany was the big gun in Eurasia, having replaced the US as the most powerful country in the UN.

With Canadian and Mexican prices beginning to spiral out of control, the President was giving serious consideration to invading one or the other of the countries and annexing them to the US. Only the Populist Congress kept him from doing so. American industry was rebuilding itself, the wealth of natural resources a boon to the recovering country much the same as it had been a century and a half before.

The opening of the new Alaskan oil fields diminished the need for imported oil and Mexico began exporting much of its oil to Great Britain. A trans-Canadian pipeline had been constructed to transport the oil from Alaska. Canada built the pipeline and extracted a tiny fee per barrel of oil transported. But, with the pipeline flowing 24/7, that tiny fee became billions of dollars per year and the Canadians were able to repeal the GST and PST (Government and Provincial Sales Tax) reducing the tax burden on the average Canadian by 15%.

In the US, the Military Industrial Complex was king. However, there was only so much the government could buy using the sharply reduced income it received from the flat rate income tax. The factories began to shift to consumer goods. Mom and Pop stores were unable to compete with the giant, Wal-Mart, and soon every major city sported a Wal-Mart, superstore.

Wal-Mart, with its market domination, negotiated exclusive contracts with the manufacturers and all of the other chains went broke. Only General Motors survived from among the many automobile manufacturers. GM built the Humvee, the military's vehicle of choice. With the limited labor pool, only GM survived. Parts for the older non-GM vehicles became more and more scarce as mechanics worked to keep them running.

Fortunately, The Ranchers and Chandlerites used their vehicles sparingly and in the 5 years since they had appropriated the vehicles, few had 20,000 miles registering on the

odometers. The two settlements had cleaned out every parts department in the greater Phoenix area and they could keep their vehicles running long after the current generation of residents had died of old age.

They had accumulated a few military surplus Humvees that the military had designated as not worth repairing. They preferred the armored versions and painstakingly rebuilt them from the ground up. It was fortunate that the military didn't know of their vast storehouse of parts or they surely would have requisitioned them.

Susan and Chuck were at the range, Susan with the White Feather and Chuck with his M-24 and the Barrett M82A1M. Susan was consistently shooting $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ MOA groups with the new rifle. Chuck was managing to shoot an average $\frac{5}{8}$ MOA groups with the M-24. He contented himself with shooting anything under 1 MOA with the Barrett M82A1M. Jerry had loaded various hand loads for the White Feather and eventually he found the perfect combination that allowed Susan to shoot so well. He was now working on loads for the .50 BMG so that Chuck could improve his groups. Chuck had issued the instruction requiring the residents to maintain their shooting skills just to humor Gunny. Gunny was having fun with his new play pretties, the M-1117's.

It was spring, 2003 and Randy had the crops in. The five men and their wives and children plus Randy and his family had had a picnic to celebrate the completion of the planting. The women were congregated in one group talking about whatever it is that women talk about. The men were all sitting at a picnic table enjoying a beer and discussing various topics when a young woman, the duty radio operator, handed Terry a note.

"What do you make of this?" Terry asked, reading them the note. The operator had intercepted a radio transmission on the 20-meter band that she said sounded like gibberish. Some words were clear enough, like Arizona, Phoenix, The Ranch and Chandler, but the majority of the transmission was either in code or in a language with which she was unfamiliar. It seemed like every third word was something that sounded like mo-fo.

The men sat up and took notice right away. They understood that term easily enough. One of them would have to monitor the radio from now on. Maybe the gangsters were alive and well and preparing to move. The military had intercepted the transmissions weeks earlier and had deciphered enough of the conversations to figure out that Muslim radicals had invaded the US yet again. Apparently, the gangs had taken care of the terrorists for the government if they understood the conversations correctly.

The terrorists had all been black, perhaps Sudanese? The Sudanese were the only viable group of Muslim men left in the world. President Hatch ordered the CIA to infiltrate the Sudanese and find out what was going on. He also ordered the military to monitor the 20-meter band and other amateur bands suitable for long distance, non-repeater conversations.

Although the CIA used black operatives to infiltrate the Sudanese, they stuck out as

much as the Sudanese had stuck out among the American gangs. It wasn't until President Hatch contacted Tony Blair in Canada that the tide began to change. In return for the US covertly supporting Blair's attempt to regain his seat as a MP, he would have friends in the SIS, aka MI-6, look into the matter for the US.

He also informed the President that once he was re-established as Prime Minister, Great Britain would gladly accept as a GIFT, the Spruance class destroyers that the US was in the process of decommissioning. Caught between a rock and a hard spot, Hatch had no alternative to agree.

Apparently the British were a forgiving lot. Blair's resignation before any public scandal arose over whatever sin he was perceived to have committed placed him in good stead and he was reelected as an MP and once again became the Prime Minister. Hatch kept his promise, providing Blair first with the funds and then with the decommissioned Spruance class destroyers.

Blair publicly announced that Great Britain was joining the North American Treaty Organization and the UN could like it or lump it. The British Navy was now the second largest Navy in the world, second only to the Americans. After months of investigation, the SIS finally learned that bin Laden was dead. Crucified they heard; had taken 3 days to die. Blair passed along the intelligence to the Americans. A week later the Guardian Unlimited broke the news of the death of Osama bin Laden.

As 2003 passed into 2004, VP Kyl announced his candidacy for the office of President and the Governor from the great state of California as his running mate. The Populists didn't do political conventions like the old Republicans and Democrats. They took a national straw poll of the members of their party and selected a Presidential candidate.

The candidate, in turn, selected his running mate. Indeed the political scene had changed. There were still local primary elections, but they no longer were used to identify candidates for the offices of President and Vice President, they only dealt with the local political scene.

The message traffic on the 20-meter band slowly increased and the military became convinced that the gangs were preparing for an onslaught against the settlements. Unable to successfully infiltrate the gangs they couldn't even find, they warned America, via the only public news channel, ABC News, to be prepared for attacks.

At The Ranch, the Committee of Five, as they became known, took turns monitoring the 20-meter band. They concluded that the California gangs were going to bypass California settlements altogether, because they were too large, and strike in their area. When, they had no idea.

When the Moroccans learned of the death of bin Laden, a small group of Muslims vowed to kill British Prime Minister Tony Blair and American President Orrin Hatch. It never occurred to them that Osama was the cause of his own death. They were certain

that the British and Americans were behind the death, after all, hadn't the UK's prominent Guardian Unlimited broken the story? And hadn't President Hatch uttered that blasphemous epitaph for their fallen leader, "Good Riddance!"

They traveled from Morocco to Eurasia by boat and from Spain to England by train; their only moment of fear coming as they traversed the English Channel in the Chunnel. Security around Prime Minister Blair was too tight and after weeks of trying to find some method of accessing Blair, they gave up and boarded a ship bound for America.

The voyage took 10 days and they jumped ship as the freighter neared its American port in the Chesapeake Bay. Hatch was a lame duck President and he took more and more to vacationing, either at Camp David or at his beach home near Annapolis, Maryland.

The gangs had set Tuesday November 2, 2004, Election Day, as the date they would mount simultaneous attacks on several settlements around the US. The group from Los Angeles planned to hit Chandler and The Ranch simultaneously. According to their intelligence, the population of The Ranch was just shy of 300 and Chandler just a shade over 400. They planned to hit at noon, assuming that most of the populations of the two settlements would be in their County Seat casting their ballots in the Presidential Election.

On Monday, November 1, 2004, as President Orrin Hatch was leaving his beach home to travel by Marine helicopter to Andrews AFB and from there to Salt Lake City to cast his ballot in the next day's election, a Moroccan terrorist fired an RPG-7, striking the Marine helicopter as Hatch boarded. President Hatch, his wife and the crew of Marine 1 were killed outright when the helicopter exploded. The Secret Service killed the group of terrorists within moments.

The nation was stunned. Jon Kyl, a shoo-in to be the next President according to an ABC News poll, almost refused to take the oath of office. But then, he figured that there couldn't possibly be any more Muslim fanatics and he was expected to win the election the next day, so why not? Jon Kyl, Populist Vice President, formerly an Independent and before that a Republican became the 46th President of the United States.

And therein arose a latent ambiguity in the single term limitation, which amended the US Constitution. The weak little Republican and Democrat parties intended to contest the election, all the way to the Supreme Court if necessary, if Kyl were elected President. Many of the Populist Senators and Representatives were farmers, not lawyers, and their crafting of the single term limit was clumsy. Instead of simply amending the Twenty-fifth Amendment the Populist legislators repealed the Twenty-fifth Amendment and substituted a new Twenty-fifth Amendment.

Under a revised 25th Amendment, VP Kyl, having served as President for less than 3 months, would have been eligible for election to a single term of being elected to the office. However, the 25th Amendment made it unclear, having incorporated only section I

of the 25th Amendment and not section II of the 25th Amendment.

The gangs held back from the two Arizona settlements hoping to avoid discovery. They did not see the residents leaving at 7:30am to vote at their County Seats. Neither did they see the residents' return nor the next group departing at 9:30am to vote. By the time they moved into position to make their attacks, the second group had voted and returned to either Chandler or The Ranch.

The first group to return from voting heard the first radio traffic between the gangs and it became apparent that they were about to be attacked. The gangs, so clever to this point, had made a series of errors. They hadn't maintained a watch on the communities and they hadn't maintained radio silence. Both Chandler and The Ranch had gone on full alert when they picked up the nearby radio traffic. Dozens of snipers were perched on the roof of the house and the extended roof over the RV's and mobile homes.

The gang leader, an individual known as Scrap, gave the command to attack over his 20-meter mobile radio. The gangs moved to attack both facilities from the north. At The Ranch, they held their fire until the gangsters were within 200 yards of the housing. At that moment, Gunny spoke one word into the loudspeaker system, "Fire!" Six Mark-19's, six Ma Deuces and 2 M-240s opened up, as did the snipers on the rooftops and the residents from their fighting trenches.

The 400 or so gangsters attacking The Ranch went down like wheat before a scythe. The gangsters had opened fire but had no visible targets to shoot at. Fixed fortifications sometimes work if the attackers are dumb enough to attack them directly as had been the case in this instance.

The Maginot Line didn't fail the French 65 years before; the Germans went around it. The Siegfried Line failed only after 11 days, according to one account, which concluded, "By the end of February the 70th Division had successfully concluded the first phase of its attack in the Sarre Basin. In the 11 days of the attack, its first offensive action as a division, it had penetrated the primary defenses of the enemy in front of the Siegfried Line and had established a foothold on German soil just south of Saarbruecken.

"More than 1,800 prisoners had been taken; and the division's casualties totaled 1,662, of which 207 had been killed and 231 were missing. XV Corps had thus fulfilled the requirements of the limited offensive on the Seventh Army left flank by bringing up the line to a new point of departure."

The late Scrap simply didn't know his history. He should not have dropped out of school in the 9th grade to sell drugs. The story wasn't any different at the several dozen communities around the country. The well-armed gangsters charged headlong into carefully laid ambushes, never realizing that the country knew that they were massing for an attack. Once more, the residents of The Ranch dug out their backhoe to bury the dead.

President Kyl won the election of 2004 by a clear majority of votes. He even won Flori-

da! The Republicans and Democrats brought their lawsuit and it failed at the District Court, the Appeals Court and by 9-0 at the Supreme Court. A similar challenge to Arnold becoming the Vice President met with similar results. When the expedited court battles were over, Kyl and Swartzenegger were sworn in and the country continued to rebuild. Complaints from consumers forced GM to bring out the H2 and eventually a high mileage version of the Hummer called the H3.

al-Qaida – Chapter 19 – New Housing

Gunny decided that it was time to do a complete inventory of their weapons and ammunition and see what they could do to standardize their equipment and insure adequate supplies. They had the equipment and supplies to reload several calibers of ammunition. He eliminated the eastern bloc calibers, 5.45x39mm and 7.62x39mm, deciding to use those weapons as trade goods. That ammo was available, but getting spare parts for the AK's and SKS's was difficult.

He found several shortages: .223, .223 linked, .308, .50BMG linked, 9mm, .357 Mag and .45 Auto. They would just have to reload the .357 Magnum; they couldn't get that from the military. They were also short on 40mm linked grenades. While they had sufficient stock of the 40mm grenades for the M203's and M79's, they had no more practice grenades. He decided to try and get more of those, too. Since the Army only had a small contingent stationed in Phoenix, he decided to contact his old buddy, Sergeant Major Roberts at Pendleton.

He placed the call and was connected to Sgt. Major Roberts. "Gunny Shirley, what the hell are you up to these days?" Roberts asked.

"That bunch of gangsters out of LA hit us on November 2nd," Gunny commented, "But the main reason for my call is get an ammo resupply."

"Give me the list and I'll see what I can do," Roberts replied.

Gunny slowly read the list of their requirements. He could tell that Roberts was starting to get a little, what he wasn't sure, about halfway down his list.

"Are you planning on WW IV?" Roberts asked.

"Not really, but we do a lot of practicing," Gunny replied.

"I'm going to have to push this up the chain," Roberts said, "That is a lot of ordinance. Tell you one thing, though, all the 40mm stuff will be HEDP (High Explosive Dual Purpose), is that ok?"

"Of course," Gunny said.

"And you're going to have to retire those old M79's unless you want riot control rounds," Roberts explained.

"Naw, scratch that stuff from the list," Gunny acknowledged.

"I can't get you that many M-67 practice grenades either," Roberts continued, "Are you willing to settle for a couple of cases of the grenades and several cases of replacement fuses?"

“Sure, I sort of figured on that,” Gunny replied.

“As it is, they’re going to have to ship the ordinance out of Barstow, assuming it’s approved,” Roberts said. “Did you miss anything?”

“Don’t suppose we could get some more of the M-1117’s do you?” Gunny half ducked as he made the request.

“You and you’re political clout caused quite a stink,” Roberts laughed. “Some of those 12 M-1117’s they shipped to Arizona out of Barstow were supposed to come here to Pendleton. But, they’ve been rolling them off the assembly line at a pretty good clip lately. I suppose you want to lease some more for 20 years for \$1, huh?”

“Yeah, I think we can scrounge up a couple of dollars somewhere,” Gunny allowed. “Is there any way we can get some extra SAW’s? And some new barrels for our M-2s?”

“Glad to let you have the SAW’s, they are a worthless piece of crap,” Roberts said, “How many M-2s do you have that you need new barrels for?”

“Four,” Gunny replied.

“I’ll put 4 refurbished M-2’s on the list and have them add an extra 3 barrels per weapon. That will give you 6 extra barrels for each M-2. Will that be enough?” Roberts inquired.

“Of course,” Gunny replied, “Do you want us to ship our brass back with the M-2’s?”

“Damn straight I do,” Roberts said, “That will take a little of the sting out of your request. Now, I have something I want to ask you about.”

“Shoot,” Gunny responded. “What could I possibly do for you?”

“The General is retiring this year and he wants to relocate to Phoenix,” Roberts explained. “Think you could find him some nice digs there in the area?”

“There’s a bunch of people moved back into Farnsworth Village East in Mesa,” Gunny remarked. “Even has a golf course. Not a fancy course, but a golf course. The General still quite the golfer?”

“Yeah, does 9-holes a day on weekdays and 18-holes a day on weekends,” Roberts acknowledged. “That sounds like it might be okay. Does the place have any security?”

“Some, but it’s mostly just seniors,” Gunny said, “Mostly a few old Korean war vets. But they aren’t particularly well armed.”

“Korean war, huh?” Roberts reflected, “I’ll talk to the General about pulling some Gar-

and's from the DCM for those guys. We have plenty of the Korean .30-06 in Garand clips, too. Suppose that would help them out any?"

"Hell yes," Gunny replied. "We have some AK's and SKS's I was going to use for trade goods. I'll just give them to those guys. Got any ammo for those?"

"Some. We have the stuff we collected after the two invasions. How many million rounds do they need?"

"Not that much, that's for sure. Maybe 100,000 rounds of the 7.62x 39mm and 25,000 rounds of the 5.45x39mm," Gunny said.

"I'll have it on the shipment with your stuff, get those weapons to them will you?" Roberts directed.

"Sure thing," Gunny replied.

"You have room for a tired old Sgt. Major at that ranch of yours?" Roberts asked tentatively.

"As long as you're willing to live in an RV, sure. Are you retiring too?" Gunny asked.

"Not by choice," Roberts laughed, "But I'm too old for this crap anymore. As far as the RV goes, the wife and I have a 14'x70' mobile home we were figuring on towing to Phoenix, can you find room for that?"

"No sweat," Gunny replied.

"You heard that they're pulling the Army out of Phoenix and stationing a Marine contingent at Luke AFB haven't you?" Roberts asked.

"No, and that sounds pretty stupid to me," Gunny remarked. "That's at least 30 minutes west of downtown."

"It's not going to be a problem, Gunny," Roberts explained, "You boys started something with that special interest legislation of yours. Posse Comitatus is being revised to let local law enforcement be equipped with stock military equipment. No tanks or anything, but the M-1117s are being made available to any locals that want them. The Maricopa County Sheriff has a request in for one."

"So, when do you need the house in Mesa for the General and when will you be here?" Gunny followed up.

"The Change of Command ceremony is the day after tomorrow. Say a week to ten days for the General's house. I'll be along the week after." Roberts explained.

"I'd better get a move on then," Gunny said, "See you in a few days."

Gunny went looking for Chuck. He finally found Chuck and Susan at the range. As usual, Susan was shooting circles around Chuck.

"Hey Gunny, what's up?" Chuck greeted him.

"Chuck, Susan," Gunny greeted them. He picked up the pile of targets on Susan's side of the table. "Dang girl, you get any better and you'll be able to cover the group with a dime instead of a quarter. Chuck, you need to practice more."

"You just here to critique our shooting or do you want something Gunny?" Chuck asked.

"Just got off the phone with Sgt. Major Roberts," Gunny explained. "Called him to see about getting some ammo and such. He and the General are giving it up and moving to Phoenix."

"Oh?" Chuck exclaimed, "When is this all taking place?"

"Soon," Gunny answered. He recounted the conversation with Roberts to Chuck and Susan.

"Well, I don't have any problem with giving the AK's and SKS's to those people in Mesa," Chuck acknowledged, "But what in the hell do we need with 2 more M-1117s?"

"Never can have too much of a good thing, Chuck!" Gunny laughed. "I was thinking while I was looking for you. Those RV's have seen better days and frankly, they're a little small. What would you say if we went scrounging again?"

"What did you have in mind?" Susan asked.

"Well, there're probably 150 new 14'x70' mobile homes sitting around the greater Phoenix area," Gunny commented. "Why don't we extend that dirt cover to 100' deep and replace the RV's and travel trailers with mobile homes? We can use the housing tract for storage of our produce and the like."

"I've thought that we should replace the RV's with mobile homes for years," Susan said, "It's about time someone brought it up."

"Ok Gunny, we'll do it," Chuck said, "But that is going to overtax our PV array."

"We can get all of the electricity we need from Palo Verde Chuck," Gunny said. "How about you get with some of the men and get the cover extended? Susan, you can work with the wives and see to the transition."

"We'll start by building the new section of roof first, Gunny; that will give you a place to

locate the first bunch of trailers,” Chuck explained. “Then we’ll work on extending the old roof another 40’. We’ll pull the RV’s right up to the new mobile homes. That way, we won’t have to haul the stuff so far. And, it will make room for more mobile homes.”

“We can probably come up with a few of those semis they use for hauling the mobile homes,” Gunny said, “That will make the whole process a little easier. I’ll take the AK’s and SKS’s to Farnsworth Village and find the General a home. We should be able to haul a dozen mobile homes a day, maybe more.”

“Don’t get too rambunctious Gunny,” Chuck laughed, “It’s going to take us some time to build that big of a roof and I don’t want to have to work around the mobile homes.”

Chuck figured that they would need a space about 24’ wide and 100’ long for each mobile home. No sense in crowding them too much. That meant that the roof would need to cover almost 400,000 square feet. There was no way that they had that much lumber. On the other hand, if they built the roof with concrete, it would support a lot more weight and they could pile the dirt a lot deeper. He also figured that it would be better to install only exhaust fans in the south wall of the cover. He got together with the carpenters and started to discuss building slip forms. Maybe they could handle the whole thing in a continuous pour.

One of the carpenters who also had done a lot of concrete work showed Chuck what they would need for support columns for the concrete roof. He also suggested that they needed to ‘take a day or two’ and plan this project a little better. What they had done before made sense at the time. However, if they did it right, they wouldn’t need intake or exhaust fans and vent the gasses using ducting.

They set about designing the new roof. They decided to put the homes 27’ apart to allow for sidewalks. By the end of the day, they had decided to build a square 800’ on a side. Chuck did some quick calculations. Holy Crap that would take almost 36,000 yards of concrete. But, they were only going to rough float it and they would do a continuous pour. For sure they needed a portable bulk plant, maybe 2. And, all of the ready mix trucks they could lay their hands on; and lots and lots of concrete pumps.

Gunny pulled in leading a convoy of 6 mobile homes. Chuck flagged him down and asked him to leave the homes sit and come over to the porch for a parlay. He outlined the discussions of that day and pointed out how much concrete the project would take. Did they, Chuck asked, really need to build a roof over the mobile homes? Couldn’t they just plant some trees and provide shade instead? It would take months to build the roof, he insisted.

“You have a point Chuck,” Gunny said, “I guess that I never thought about it in those terms. We just sort of added cover for a few homes at a time and the RV’s are a lot smaller than the mobile homes. The only thing is, it will take the trees about 10 years to provided as much shade as the roof and our well won’t produce enough water.”

“Do you really believe that there’s enough cement in the whole Phoenix area to do this?” Chuck countered?

“Probably not,” Gunny acknowledged. “On the other hand, we can probably find some of those clamshell tree diggers and move in bigger trees.”

“All right,” Chuck said, “Let those mobile homes sit where they are. Let’s get one bulk plant and a couple of ready mix trucks. Find an abandoned neighborhood and pull down the streetlights. We’ll put in streetlights along with the utilities and sidewalks. Give us about a week to get ahead of you and then you can start setting the mobile homes. I’ll get on the concrete equipment and you keep pulling mobile homes. Park them along the road for now.”

Chuck had his whole crew in the Phoenix area the next day. They found the ready mix trucks and a bulk plant and began stripping several neighborhoods of their streetlights. The backhoe was busy digging utility trenches. They also found a trencher and got it to digging utility trenches, too. The trencher was so much faster than the backhoe that they quit using the backhoe after two days and let the trencher do all of the digging.

They started laying the water and sewer lines plus the underground electrical wiring. The streetlights would be run off the solar array and the homes from commercial power. They constructed an array of transfer switching that would allow them to switch to their own internal power in an emergency.

Gunny was hauling trailers at the rate of a dozen a day. He finally stopped and began to set the trailers. It took a full day to level a mobile home and hook up the utilities. Fortunately, there were enough people to allow them to set a dozen a day. When they ran out of mobile homes to set, he resumed hauling the trailers, setting them right in place.

The utility crews stayed a week ahead of him and the nursery folks 3 days ahead of him. When Roberts showed up, a few days later than expected, Gunny set Robert’s trailer right next to his in the front row. They ended up with 8 rows of mobile homes with 25 homes in each row except for the 4th and 5th rows. They set up some playground equipment for the children in that area. As it was, it took them a month to complete the project.

They had driven the RV’s back to the dealers’ lots and dumped them; all but a dozen of the nicer ones, that is. They might want to take a vacation, you know. They had ended up appropriating 195 14’x70’ mobile homes, all spanking brand new. It was fun to be scrounging again. When they were all done, they held a picnic, roasting the fatted calf and a couple of hogs. The General and his wife were invited and the weary residents tried, unsuccessfully, to party late into the night. They couldn’t remember when they had been so tired.

“This is all pretty impressive,” the General said, “And thanks for choosing the house that you did for Mary and me. She adores it. You guys don’t have to keep calling me Gen-

eral, we're all retired, call me Walt."

"Walt?" Gunny laughed, "Hell, I thought your name was General. No Sir. I don't expect any of us old Marines will call you anything but General. You might as well just get used to it."

"Do I understand correctly that most of the people here are deputy Sheriff's?" Walt asked.

"Over a hundred, yes," Chuck replied, "Although, we've all been placed back on reserve status. Back in 1997 and 1998, we had a run in with the ATF and the Pinal County Sheriff deputized the whole bunch of us. I was already a reserve deputy at the time."

"That was back when Clinton got killed here in Phoenix, wasn't it?" Walt observed.

"Yes, but President Hatch pardoned us for that affair," Chuck noted.

"You were involved in that?" Walt asked.

"Built the bomb myself, right here at The Ranch," Chuck admitted. "And got the ATF blamed for it. Solved a lot of problems."

"I wouldn't let that get out if I were you," Walt suggested.

"It won't," Chuck assured him, "Aside from those of us sitting here at this table, only 3 other living people even suspect that we were involved and they will never breath a word."

"How can you be so sure?" Walt asked.

"Well General," Chuck laughed, "You remember when that car blew up with the former Attorney General and former Director of the FBI in it?"

"Vaguely," Walt replied, "Why?"

"The 3 FBI agents that had it about figured out retired the next week," Chuck smiled. "After looking over their shoulders for a year or so, they moved here. Those three over at that table over there are those FBI agents. No, I don't think that we have anything to worry about."

"Gunny, let me ask you a question," Walt said.

"Yes Sir?" Gunny replied.

"Why are you maintaining what amounts to an armed camp?" Walt asked, "Don't you have any faith in the US military at all?"

“Of course we do Sir,” Gunny replied, “But there’s still plenty of groups out there that we have to watch out for; groups that are essentially protected by the Constitution that the military and law enforcement can’t do anything about. That’s who I’m worried about. For example, that group of Tom Metzger’s, White Aryan Resistance (WAR), would attack us in a heartbeat if they thought they could pull it off. They’d love to have our weaponry.”

“I see your point Gunny,” Walt acknowledged, “I hadn’t even given them a thought. You only have around 400 people in this settlement; why do you have enough ordinance for a Battalion?”

“General, we have a little bit of everything,” Gunny explained, “Different circumstances call for different solutions. And there’s some things that we’d like to have that we’re not willing to run the risk having.”

“For instance?” Walt asked.

“Land mines for one thing General,” Gunny said. “Until they finish developing that Non Self Destruct Alternative program, land mines are just too dangerous. You may recall, Sir, that President Inouye put that program on hold.”

“It’s not on hold anymore Gunny,” Walt replied, “But it’s a ways off. A couple of civilian contractors are working on the program right now. They are trying to develop a system that will allow the soldier/Marine to remotely monitor/control, fire, or deactivate individual munitions within the munitions field. The enhanced capability will also minimize injuries to friendly troops and non-combatants during hostilities and following a conflict. Though I suspect that they’re going to play hell getting funding from this Populist Congress.”

“Roberts, what do you think of this community?” Walt asked.

“I like it Sir,” Roberts replied, “A man can sleep at night knowing there’s a Gung-ho SOB like Gunny Shirley chomping at the bit to bite the butt of anyone who threatens the community.”

“How about Farnsworth Village General; did you get some defenses set up there?” Roberts asked.

“Pretty much,” Walt answered, “The old vets were happy getting the M1’s. The younger people all wanted to Rock and Roll, so we gave them the AK’s and SKS’s. I got a couple of Gunnery Sergeants from Luke to put everyone through their paces. Only thing is, we don’t really have a good place to shoot.”

“Well, why don’t you come down here, Sir, we have a 1,000 meter range,” Gunny offered. “No one would be using it at all except I got Chuck to make practicing mandatory. Besides, you should see Susan shoot that White Feather you gave to Chuck. Jerry made up some hand loads tuned for the weapon and she’s shooting ¾ MOA group’s

most of the time.”

“Ok, we’ll do it,” Walt said, “I’d like to see someone who could outshoot Chuck.”

al-Qaida – Chapter 20 – WAR

The two Phoenix settlements occasionally got some press, a fact that did not go unnoticed by Tom Metzger and his followers. The thing that grated on Metzger the most was that the settlements were totally integrated. The populations of both settlements included Hispanics, Orientals, Indians, Blacks and Jews. Oh, and a few white folks, too.

He often referred directly to them in his hateful missives, though never by name. The fact that the Committee of Five included 3 white men, a Hispanic and a black retired Marine Corps Master Sergeant offended him to no end. When he heard on ABC news that the group at The Ranch, as it was usually referred to, had received two more of the M-1117's, he decided that he needed to do something about the group.

Gunny had only used the WAR as an example at the picnic, never thinking that Metzger or his group would be foolish enough to take them on. With the connections the two groups had, they could screen potential residents far better than the average settlement. Anyone who applied for membership, if they were unknown to the residents, began by getting an NCIC check.

If they passed the first step, they were required to fill out a questionnaire and undergo an interview. Using the questionnaire and their sense of the individual and his family, they then conducted a quick but thorough background investigation of the individual.

The latest applicant family was from Pomona and knew Jorge and Connie. They vaguely remembered meeting the man when they toured Pomona, but they knew nothing about him so they began with the NCIC check, which came back clean. The man and his wife, originally from Orange County had moved to Pomona after the LA bombing.

No one knew that the man had a deep-seated resentment against Jews that came about because a former business partner who happened to be Jewish had cheated the man out of several thousand dollars. Likewise, no one knew that the couple had 3 children, not two; the man had been married previously and his ex-wife not only got custody of their daughter, but also had married a black man. When his daughter had also married a black man, the man disowned his daughter and her name was never again spoken in his house.

The man's resentment's and prejudices remained deeply hidden. He had become friends with Metzger shortly before the bombing and had kept in touch with the racist very discreetly. When Metzger asked him to infiltrate The Ranch, he fairly leaped at the chance. Because the man had remained very low key over the years and concealed his relationship with Metzger, the NCIC check revealed nothing. Neither did the interview; William Jackson, his wife Marie and their children Sandra and Shelia passed with flying colors. Gunny was unusually quiet during the interview and after, Chuck asked him about it.

"Anything about those people that bothers you Gunny? You were awful quiet tonight,"

Chuck asked.

“Not really,” Gunny said, “But that Jackson reminds me of how you used to feel about Orrin Hatch.”

“Too good to be true?” Chuck asked, understanding immediately.

“Maybe that’s it,” Gunny said, “But Jorge vouched for the guy as did several people we met in Pomona, so maybe I’m just seeing boogie men where there are none.”

“I’ve never known your instincts to be wrong, Gunny,” Chuck said, “I’ll vote against them, just give the word.”

“Naw, let them in and I’ll keep an eye on them,” Gunny said, “If there’s anything wrong with them, it’ll probably show up sooner than later.”

So the Jackson family was allowed to move in and Gunny did keep an eye on them. Bill Jackson seemed like an outgoing enough fella, but to Gunny, it almost seemed to be strained. Jackson volunteered for the militia and was a crackerjack recruit. Marie Jackson fit right in with the ladies and knew everything there was to know about canning. “Probably just my imagination,” Gunny told himself.

They pulled down the old roof over where the RV’s had sat and pulled down the roof over the tract. They built a concrete walled and roofed food storage facility in the place the tract formerly occupied and covered it back over with dirt. Even on the warmest of days, the facility didn’t much over 60 degrees.

They had, in effect, created a man made cave. The ambient temperature of a cave is the average temperature of the environment around the cave. The cool temperature of the facility meant that a lot of the fresh produce held for long periods of time. The walk-in coolers and freezers used a lot less electricity, but the workers had to wear warm clothes.

After they had completed the new food storage facility, Gunny looked around for something to keep him busy. “We ought,” he thought, “To take all of that old lumber and build a garage.” He went looking for Chuck and the others.

“Chuck, why don’t we recycle that lumber and use it to build a garage?” he asked.

“Cripes Gunny,” Chuck complained, “Can’t we have a few days off before we start something else?”

“Sure Chuck,” Gunny laughed, “You aren’t opposed to at least talking about it are you?”

“I guess not. All right, what did you have in mind?” Chuck resigned himself.

“There a hell of a pile of plywood and OSB from the roofs we took down,” Gunny explained. “We have the 6 M-1117s, the 20 Tahoes and some other trucks. Plus, we have the farm equipment. I just thought that it would last longer if we could keep everything out of the weather.”

“Aw bull!” Chuck replied, “You just want to do something to keep busy. Ok, build whatever you want, but leave me out of it. Build it 2 stories tall, it will take you longer and give us some place to store all of those parts.”

“Gee, thanks Chuck, I hadn’t thought of that,” Gunny smiled.

They constructed a windowless, 2-story building. One side of the ground level was left open. There were 2 bays to service vehicles, 6 bays to store the M-1117’s 7 bays to hold the Tahoes and a large storage area where the farm equipment, backhoe, trencher and extra trucks could be parked. The upper floor had not only enough room to store all of the parts, but sufficient room for an armory. They stored all of the munitions and extra weapons there and still had room left over.

Chuck caught up with Gunny after Gunny had finished the ‘garage’. “Why did you build the place so big, Gunny?” Chuck asked.

“Well, the ground floor needed to be the size that it is,” Gunny explained, “And it didn’t make much sense not to cover the whole ground floor with a second floor. Besides, I learned a lesson from you.”

“What’s that?” Chuck asked.

“Why did you build the new housing tract with so many homes?” Gunny asked, “Almost 50 of them are empty.”

“Didn’t want to have to go back and add on like we’ve always done before,” Chuck replied.

“My point exactly,” Gunny said. “Otherwise, someone would want room for offices or classrooms or God knows what. This way, all we have to do is throw up some partitions.”

“Fair enough.” Chuck allowed. “How is Bill Jackson working out? Still have those reservations about the guy?”

“Yes and no,” Gunny replied. “He participates well enough and is doing really well with the militia. But sometimes I still get the impression that it’s forced, or that he’s holding something back. Can’t put my finger on it.”

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed,” Chuck elaborated, “But some of the guys seem to think that he’s nosey. And a couple of times, people caught him on the phone, but he hung up

real quick when he noticed them. It's almost like he's getting information about this place and passing it on. I wasn't the least bit concerned about him at first, but what with your being uneasy about him, I started to pay closer attention."

"There's only two outside phone lines Chuck," Gunny said, "We could put a recorder on both lines and monitor them 24/7."

"Do we have the equipment to do that?" Chuck asked.

"Of course we do," Gunny said, "All we need to do is induction couple a pair of tape recorders to the outside lines. Want me to take care of it?"

"I hate the idea of monitoring phone calls Gunny; but I suppose it's better safe than sorry." Chuck reluctantly agreed.

Gunny got one of the radio people and a guy who used to work for the phone company to help him wire in a recording set up. It wasn't the most sophisticated arrangement, but unless someone had all sorts of fancy testing equipment, they'd never know the lines were tapped.

They rigged the recorders to automatically start and stop when an incoming or outgoing call was made. One 8" reel of tape would record days of conversation. Every time they changed the tapes, Gunny scanned them looking for some sign of a call by Bill Jackson. When it seemed certain that Jackson wasn't going to be making any more calls, Gunny suggested to Chuck that they needed to put some cheese on their rat trap.

"What do you have in mind?" Chuck asked.

"I'll go talk to Walt," Gunny suggested, "And get him to come down for some target practice. He will invite everyone from the Ranch to come to Farnsworth Village for Labor Day. I'll make sure Bill is at the range and hears the invitation. Then, you can post a notice that except for a few guards, The Ranch is going to accept the General's invitation. That will leave The Ranch wide open. If the guy's dirty, we ought to record a call shortly thereafter."

"And, if he's dirty?" Chuck asked, "Then what?"

"We'll play it to the hilt," Gunny suggested, "Right up until it's too late for him to call it off. He'll probably volunteer to stay here as a guard. We'll all take off and circle right back to the Ranch. If we're careful, he won't know we're here until it's too late."

"That's a pretty risky plan Gunny," Chuck said, "Can't you think of something a little less risky?"

"Maybe, maybe not," Gunny said, "Regardless, we have 4½ weeks to think about it. Want me to talk to Walt tomorrow?"

“Sure, why not,” Chuck said, “It’s better than us worrying about it.”

Gunny slipped off the next day, supposedly to do a little scavenging. He caught the General on the golf course and walked along as the General played, explaining their problem and what they had in mind. The General was more than happy to play along; if they had a spy or something in the group, it could affect not only The Ranch but also Chandler and even Farnsworth.

That afternoon, he took a bunch of the vets down to The Ranch for target practice. Gunny used the excuse that he needed to sign off on Bill’s practice that day and when the General and the vet’s showed up, Bill was busy firing an MP5 for qualification. While the Vet’s practiced, Walt engaged Chuck in a conversation.

“Chuck, how about the resident’s here at The Ranch join us up at Farnsworth for Labor Day?” Walt asked.

“Gee, I don’t know General, let me ask Gunny,” Chuck played along. “Hey Gunny, you guys got a minute?”

“What’s up Chuck?” Gunny asked.

“Walt here has invited all of The Ranch residents up to Farnsworth for Labor Day; what do you think?”

“We haven’t had any trouble in a long time, Chuck. I suppose it would be ok,” Gunny replied. “Of course, we’ll have to leave a token guard force here; we can’t abandon the place entirely.”

“Ok General, we’ll all join you at Farnsworth on Labor Day,” Chuck said. “I’ll post a notice and we’ll supply the meat, if that’s ok with you.”

“Great Chuck,” Walt replied, “I have Mary pass the word that you will all be up. It looks like the guys are about done on the firing line; we’d better get back to Farnsworth.”

Chuck prepared a notice about the Labor Day Picnic at Farnsworth and put up a sign-up sheet for volunteers for guard duty for Labor Day. That evening after supper, Gunny and he were sitting at the kitchen table.

“Do you think he took the bait?” Chuck asked.

“No way to tell Chuck,” Gunny said, “No one has signed up for guard duty yet, but I’d bet his name will be the second or third on the list if he’s dirty.”

“Check those phone tapes every day,” Chuck advised, “We’ll need to know as soon as possible.”

Two days later, Gunny asked Chuck to come to his office at the garage.

“Listen to this,” Gunny said and started the tape player.

“Hello?”

“It’s me.”

“What’s up?”

“They’ll all be gone on Labor Day except for 6 guards.”

“Are you sure?”

“Heard the invite and acceptance with my own ears.”

“6 Guards?”

“5 plus me.”

“What time?”

“Make it 1500.”

“We’ll be there.”

“Gunny, I can’t tell if that’s Jackson or not,” Chuck said.

“Doesn’t matter,” Gunny said handing him the guard signup sheet. “It’s got to be one of these 6 and look whose name is third on the list.”

“Jackson!” Chuck let out a whistle.

“Did you ever figure out a less risky way to protect this place?” Chuck asked.

“As a matter of fact yes,” Gunny smiled. “We’re going to have to use busses to get everyone to Farnsworth. So I figured that we’d put the people in the M-1117s, the fruit cellar and in the food storage building. I put Mr. Jackson in charge of the guard detail and get him here in the office for a long instruction session while the busses are pulling out. Ain’t no windows, so he’ll never know the busses are empty, all he’ll hear is them pulling out. After they’ve all left, I’ll join you and your family in your Tahoe and we’ll head out for Farnsworth.”

“How are we going to keep him from snooping around to make sure we’re all gone?” Chuck asked.

“Jose’s the last name on the list Chuck,” Gunny said, “I fill him in and make sure he keeps Jackson too busy to snoop around. I think that if Jose gets Jackson back up here in my office about ½ hour after we leave, we can sneak back in without being caught. That’s still 2 hours before the attack time he set in the phone call.”

“Who do you think it is?” Chuck asked.

“Not sure,” Gunny said, “But the phone call went to Area Code 714.”

“And that’s Orange County, California,” Chuck said, “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“Metzger,” Gunny replied.

“Exactly,” Chuck confirmed.

“I wouldn’t mind getting that SOB in my rifle sights,” Gunny said.

“No chance Gunny, he’ll never show up,” Chuck said, “How do you think he’s managed to stay out of jail all these years? The man is all bark and no bite.”

“Figure they’ll just come across on I-10?” Gunny asked.

“I would, in cars of 2 or 3 people at a time, starting about tomorrow, I-10 or maybe I-8,” Chuck said. “Then, I’d hole up somewhere like Glendale and wait until Labor Day to move to The Ranch.”

“Sounds about right,” Gunny said, “Why don’t we put a couple of guys out on US 85 at the junctions of I-10 and I-8? They’re bound to come one way or the other. No more traffic than there is on the interstates anymore, a steady stream of California cars will stick out like a sore thumb.”

Early the next morning, two Sheriff’s vehicles left on I-10 for the junction of US 85. One stopped there and the other proceeded south to the junction with I-8. The radios were set to an Arizona Highway Patrol frequency to take advantage of the repeater system. The observers called in periodically; a small but steady stream of cars was making its way from California to the Phoenix area. By 2 days before Labor Day nearly 200 California plates had passed the observers. Chuck and Gunny guessed that maybe 25% of the cars were legitimate travelers. That meant that they were facing a force of up to 500 people, hopefully less.

Jackson noticed the coming and goings of the Tahoes with men in the uniforms but didn’t give it a lot of thought. Sometimes, he’d been told, they lent a hand to one or the other of the Sheriff’s departments. Gunny called him in the day before Labor Day and

told him Jose was a little under the weather and would pull his duty from the office. Jackson would be in charge of the other 4 guards and would be Jose's eyes and ears.

That afternoon, they brought in 10 Greyhound buses from Phoenix to transport everyone to Farnsworth. They found a lot of California vehicles parked in the Avondale area and two Deputies were parked at an Avondale off ramp of the I-10 where they could observe some of the cars. Around 10 in the morning, the California vehicles began to leave Avondale headed east. The men in the Tahoe passed the message to Jose on the AHP frequency and vanished.

Gunny had spent an unusual amount of time making sure that Jose and Bill understood exactly what he expected of them. The busses pulled out during the briefing session. Shortly thereafter, Gunny joined Chuck, Susan and the kids in a Tahoe and left for the picnic. Right after he got the radio call, Jose transmitted a one-word message on the Maricopa County Sheriff's frequency, "Now," and called Bill into the office to discuss one of Gunny's instructions.

Gunny, Chuck, Susan and the kids slipped into the fruit cellar and waited until 1400. At 1400, Jose called Bill back to the office and introduced him to the business end of Chuck's suppressed Mark II. Bill started to protest, but Jose kept up the pressure until Bill lost it and called him a Fricking Greaser. Jose added a third eye in the middle of Bill's forehead.

Meanwhile the residents, dressed in desert cammo, began to take up their places in the concealed fighting holes around the housing area. Gunny, Susan and Chuck took up positions on top of the house. At 1455, the M-1117s motors were started and the vehicles sat idling in the garage. Promptly at 1500, scores of cars begin rolling into The Ranch. They parked and piled out, expecting no resistance because no guards were to be seen; apparently the inside man had taken the guards out for them. The men began to move toward the garage where they could see the M-1117s sitting.

Just as they got near enough to hear the idling motors, the M-1117s began to demonstrate their awesome firepower. Between the M-1117s and the 4 additional M-2 and 4 additional Mark-19 emplacements, 500 40mm HEDP grenades and 2,000 .50BMG bullets flew at the group of men in the space of less than one minute. There was little more than a large pile of gore remaining when the gunners stopped to reload, again. Neither the invaders nor the riflemen ever had a chance to fire; so complete was the destruction of the approximately 450 men that the resident's dug a large hole with the backhoe and scaped the remains into the hole.

The resident's of The Ranch didn't have a picnic that Labor Day, the carnage was so complete and severe that many of the residents lost their breakfasts and few had an appetite for lunch or a picnic. One of the residents, a man with a very strong stomach, took a few Polaroid photos. He placed the photos and a note in an envelope and the envelope was forward to Tom Metzger. The unsigned note simply read, "Don't Come Back!"

al-Qaida – Chapter 21 – Waiting Game

A week later on September 12, 2005, the five men were sitting on the front porch after dinner.

“Gunny, is that stink ever going to go away?” Chuck asked.

“It should Chuck, we put 20 bags of quick lime in the hole before we covered it over,” Gunny answered.

“You heard that one of the guys sent pictures to Metzger, didn’t you?” Jerry asked. “Put in a note that said ‘Don’t Come Back’, so I heard.”

“I wish that he hadn’t done that,” Chuck replied, “A lot of these racists and neo-Nazis are rural people who escaped the bombing. That Metzger may be all talk, but he knows a lot of people around the country.”

“Bring ‘em on,” Gunny laughed, “We have plenty of fuel for the backhoe.”

“If you’re worried about it Chuck,” Jerry suggested, “We could hunt the SOB down and take him out.”

“And that wouldn’t make us any better than them,” Chuck snapped back, “Taking out the ATF and Clinton was upholding and defending the Constitution of the United States. Hunting down someone just because he says things we don’t agree with is an entirely different matter. That would be going against the Constitution.”

“But,” Jerry protested, “He was probably behind the attack.”

“We may believe that, but we can’t prove it,” Chuck insisted.

Jerry let the matter drop. Technically, Chuck was right and Jerry was wrong. Chuck should have listened to Jerry.

When Tom Metzger opened the envelope and looked at the pictures, the bile rose in his throat. When he read the note, his anger flared and then turned to rage. “Don’t Come Back, my butt!” he thought, “Who did that negro-loving bunch of trash think they were anyway? By God, this is WAR! (Pun intended) He couldn’t risk telephone calls; that bunch from the FBI probably still had his phone tapped. But, if one avoided the use of certain words, the FBI’s Internet scanning programs wouldn’t flag messages; and unless the recipient complained...

He had a few email addresses, but this outrage called for more than a few emails. So, Metzger dug out his copy of ‘The Hate Directory’ published by some liberal Wannabe named Raymond A. Franklin. The directory contained the web addresses and email address of most of the groups of ‘decent’ people around the country. Metzger penned a

carefully worded email and had it sent to every group in the directory. Thank God that Gore had insisted that Clinton restore the Internet along with the phone service. Message sent, Metzger sat back and waited for replies.

“Sgt. Major,” Gunny said, “We burned up a bunch of the 40mm and the .50BMG wiping those people out. With you retired, who am I going to contact to get replacement munitions?”

“Dammit Gunny, how many times do I have to tell you to call me Jim?” Roberts laughed. “To answer your question, Walt and I set up a deal with a friend of yours and mine who works at Barstow. You remember a civilian named John Revels?”

“Yeah, he was a kid who worked there at Barstow as a dispatcher wasn’t it?” Gunny replied.

“Maybe he was a dispatcher when you knew him John,” Jim said, “But he’s the second ranking guy there now. Anyway, Walt and I talked to him just before we retired. Anything we need is only a phone call away. You remember the new barrels you needed for the Ma Deuces?”

“Yeah, you had them send me rebuilt guns with 6 extra barrels,” Gunny said.

“Ma Deuce’s usually only come with one spare barrel, John,” Jim explained, “You know that. Anyway, we were going through so many barrels, we got them to ship ours with 3 spares instead of one. So naturally, it was easy to get him to add 3 more barrels for each gun for you. Anyway, we can’t order less than one rail car of ammo at a time.”

“A rail car?” Gunny exclaimed, “I was only looking for 10 cases each of ammo.”

“But the railcar can be made up of any assortment we need,” Jim said, “Why don’t you double or triple that order and then figure out what else we can use.”

“We only have 15 M136-AT4s, and 15 M72 LAWs,” Gunny said, “I’d give anything to have more of each of those.”

“Then order them,” Jim said.

“Hell Jim, you can’t get the M72s anymore and they won’t issue the M136s to civilians,” Gunny protested.

“Wrong on both counts you goof head,” Jim laughed, “They quit issuing the M72s, but that doesn’t mean they don’t have any. As far as the M136s go, that’s current inventory. Anything Walt or I order will be billed directly to the Corps at Pendleton for training. You remember what a nightmare it was to properly account the cost of munitions expended in training don’t you?”

"I'd better get with Chuck and get a list together then," Gunny said, "I'll talk to you later."

Gunny found Chuck and Susan on the firing range trying to outshoot each other. Chuck was losing, as usual.

"Chuck, I was just talking to the Sgt. Major," Gunny explained, "And he and Walt have a deal with a guy we know at Barstow. Number 2 man there. Anyway, we can get anything we want that they stock. We can get LAW rockets, AT-4s; well like I said, anything they stock. The catch is that we can only order by the rail car. The Sgt. Major, Jim, suggested that we double or triple up on the 40mm grenades and .50BMG and figure out what else we could use to make up a rail car sized order."

"If we can really get LAWs, order 185 more of them and 85 more of the AT-4s," Chuck responded. "How about some M1006 Canister rounds for the Mark-19's?"

"That's pretty short range stuff," Gunny said, "It's only good to 100 meters. I'll get 20 cases of it if I can. That's an Army munition, not a Corps munition."

"We ought to round out our hand grenades, too," Chuck suggested, "We should have some Mk3A2 concussive grenades, some more M67s, some AN-M14 TH3 Thermate, some M15 Willy Pete and a better assortment of smoke. We should also pick up some smoke for the M203's. Do you suppose we could get any M18A1 APM Claymores?"

"Anything they have in stock I told you," Gunny repeated, "How is our supply of C-4?"

"One case," Chuck replied.

"Ok, Jim and I will figure out the quantities," Gunny said, "But I can tell you that we're probably into the second rail car already. Can you think of anything else?"

"You can get me my own White Feather," Chuck laughed, "I'm tired of Susan out shooting me."

"It will take a hell of a lot more than a fancy rifle for you to out shoot her," Gunny laughed.

"Gunny, there's one other thing. I'm not really comfortable with all of the ammo being stored over the garage," Chuck added, "Why don't you put in a bunker for it?"

"I thought you'd never ask," Gunny smiled.

Gunny went over the list with Jim. Jim made a few suggestions about quantities and they got on the phone to John Revels at Barstow. When they were done with the list, John pointed out that there would be some room in the second rail car. Was there anything else they could use? Gunny asked about the White Feather. No problem John said, how many did they want (up to 6)? Six! Anything else?

How about some more ammo for the SAWs and 6 more of the SAWs while he was at it? Did they want the linked .223 in the M995 or in ball? M995, of course; no problem. Did they want him to fill out the load with .308 and .223 ammo? He had some of the M993 and M995 available on strippers. You're damn straight Gunny told him; they didn't have any AP for either caliber rifle. John told him that he was sorry, but due to a backlog of orders, he couldn't ship the stuff for 3 days.

"Jim, Chuck wants me to put in a bunker for the munitions, want to work with me on that?" Gunny asked.

"You'd better make that bunkers, Gunny," Jim said, "I don't like the way you guys store everything together."

By the time the two rail cars of supplies arrived in Phoenix from Barstow 4 days later, they had two bunkers complete and were working on the third. The ammunition for the weapons went into the first, the explosives into the second, and when the third was finished, they stored the rockets in it. Gunny decided to turn all of the empty space over the garage into recreation room that could double as a meeting room. He didn't tell Chuck about the 6 White Feathers.

Metzger heard back from about one-third of the groups he contacted by email, not counting the many emails that bounced. Only the skinheads seemed interested in joining his cause. The other groups offered their full support, just not their bodies. If they couldn't shout you down or use a can of spray paint, they were 'too occupied with pressing matters' to help out. Yeah, right. Cowards! Well, those skinheads were pretty righteous people, they weren't afraid of mixing it up. He contacted them back and set up a meeting in Idaho since it was the most central location to the groups.

The neo-Nazi meeting was held January 15, 2006 in an out-of-the-way southern Idaho community. The exchanges of rhetoric were enough to gag a maggot, but they were able to agree on one thing; those people down in Arizona needed to be taught a lesson. There were enough of them, so they would take out both groups: The Ranch and Chandler.

Metzger decided that they needed to pick a Holiday and attack when the folks would be busy celebrating. Metzger told them he had no idea what had gone wrong before, possibly his inside man had been turned. The groups decided that they needed at least 6 weeks to get organized, some time to do proper intelligence and time after that to plan and practice the attack. Two and a half months would put them into early April. The first Holiday after that when they could reasonably expect the people to be picnicking and partying was July 4th.

More and more frequently, the Committee of Five's meetings included the wives, so they decided to become the Committee of Ten. In the colder weather, the Committee held their ritual after dinner meeting in the recreation room, because Chuck's kitchen

wouldn't hold ten people comfortably. Gunny had built a plain little bar off to one side; they needed somewhere to keep the beer cold. Since it was Valentine's Day, the men were especially solicitous of their wives, fetching their coffee and the usual things men occasionally do when they want to show them that they love them. And the wives let them believe that they didn't know what the men were up to.

"Gunny, I sure appreciate the White Feather that you got me for Christmas," Chuck said, "But I've heard around that you got it in with that shipment of ammo and explosives. Why didn't you give it to me when you got it?"

"I needed something to give you for Christmas," Gunny winked, "Besides, you've had it for 7 weeks or so; tell me, who is the better shot now?"

"Susan, but she had a head start!" Chuck protested.

"Chuck, if you can shoot that White Feather as good as Susan can a year from now, I'll eat my hat," Gunny egged him on. "And if I can ever shoot as well as either one of you two, I'll eat it with hot sauce."

"Why do they call the rifle the White Feather?" Terry asked.

"It goes back to Nam," Gunny said, "With probably more than 300 kills during the Vietnam War, Carlos Hathcock is the most famous sniper in United States History. The North Vietnamese put a \$30,000 bounty on his head and called him "Long Trang" or White Feather. Hathcock was once credited with hitting a NVA at 2,500 yards with a special scope-adapted .50 caliber machine gun using single shot operation."

"Dang," Terry said, "That's almost a mile and a half."

"Yep, and he did it with a Ma Deuce," Gunny acknowledged. "I expect that's where someone got the idea to make a .50BMG rifle like that Barrett M82A1M of Chuck's."

"I've got a question," Jerry said, "How come we got 4 train car loads of munitions in a period of 3 months? Is the something I should know about?"

"Not really," Gunny said, "I wanted to replace the 40mm and the .50BMG we wasted on those White Supremists. Roberts told me I could only get stuff by the carload and one thing lead to another and we ended up with two carload of stuff. We have enough LAWs to give every militia person one and enough AT-4's for every other militia person. Plus, I picked up some more SAWs and a bunch of AP for the rifles."

"Hell Gunny, we have enough ammo and explosives to outfit us, Chandler, Farnsworth and a couple more settlements besides," Jerry said, "I was serious, are we expecting trouble?"

"Not specifically, no," Gunny frowned, "But you've all seen the lengths that someone like

that Tom Metzger will go to. I wouldn't be particularly surprised if he tries it again."

"Dammit," Jerry spat, "I knew we should have taken that SOB out. But no, we couldn't because Chuck said we couldn't prove he'd violated the Constitution. By God if I could shoot half as good as Chuck, I'd have done it myself."

"And then you wouldn't have been any better than he is," Chuck reminded Jerry. "If we can ever tie him to anything illegal, I'll take him out myself."

"Gunny, you said that you wouldn't be surprised if Metzger tries it again," Jerry ignored Chuck. "If he does, when do you think he'd be likely to try it?"

"Well, let's figure it out, shall we?" Gunny challenged Jerry. "Assuming that he got those pictures and assuming that they po'd him bad enough to retaliate, it probably took him a while to get anyone to agree to work with him. Say maybe 3 months give or take. Then, he would have had to meet with them and they would have had to get organized. Say maybe another 2 months give or take.

"Since infiltrating Bill Jackson didn't work out for him the last time, they'd have to do some intelligence work; figure 1 or 2 months to do that right. After that, they'd have to develop a plan and, if they were smart, practice a little. Then, they'd have to wait for a major Holiday when we wouldn't be on guard. They'd be ready in April or May, I'd expect, and the next major party type holiday after that would be the 4th of July. So if they're going to hit us, it will be either the 4th of July or Labor Day, it depends on how long they take to get ready."

"And what are we going to do about it?" Jerry asked.

"For now, nothing" Chuck replied. "Come about the first of April, we put the Tahoes out on I-8 and I-10, both east and west, plus I-17 north and I-60 south. That will cover all of our bases. Then we sit and wait. This time, assuming that they do show up, I think that we should take the fight to them instead of waiting for them to attack."

"Well, if we're going to do that," Gunny said, "I need to make a slight adjustment in our ordinance. Everything we have is defensive. We need to add something to switch to an offensive mode."

Like what?" Chuck asked.

"Mortars," Gunny said.

"Mortars?" Chuck almost choked on his beer.

"Let me explain to you about mortars," Gunny said, "All maneuver units require indirect fire to win. Mortars provide unique indirect fires that are organizationally responsive to

the ground maneuver commander. Military history has repeatedly demonstrated the effectiveness of mortars.

“Their rapid, high-angle, plunging fires are invaluable against dug-in enemy troops and targets in defilade, which are not vulnerable to attack by direct fires. Although they are part of the total fire support system, mortar sections and platoons are not simply small artillery batteries. They play a unique and vital role on the Land Battlefield.

“Mortars allow the maneuver commander to quickly place killing indirect fires on the enemy, independent of whether he has been allocated supporting artillery,” Gunny explained, “Heavy forces use carrier-mounted mortars to allow the mortar platoon to move cross-country at speeds compatible with the battalion task force.

“Light forces use wheeled vehicles or hand carry mortars into firing positions. Some companies have light mortars that can be man packed across all terrain. All mortar sections and platoons exist to provide immediate, organizationally responsive fires that can be used to meet the rapid changes in the tactical situation on the Land Battlefield.

“The US currently has five models of mortars,” he continued, “starting with the Light mortars. The 60-mm mortar, M224, provides air assault, airborne, ranger, and light infantry rifle companies with an effective, efficient, and flexible weapon. The inherent limitations of a light mortar (short-range and small-explosive charge) can be minimized by careful planning and a thorough knowledge of its capabilities. The M224 can be employed in several different configurations. The lightest weighs about 18 pounds; the heaviest weighs about 45 pounds. Each round weighs about 4 pounds.

“Then” he continued, “There are the Medium mortars. The 81-mm mortars, M29A1 and M252, are the current US medium mortars. The M252 is replacing the M29A1, but both will remain in the inventory for several years. Medium mortars offer a compromise between the light and heavy mortars. Their range and explosive power is greater than the M224, yet they are still light enough to be man-packed over long distances. The M29A1 weighs about 98 pounds. The M252 is slightly lighter, about 93 pounds. Both can be broken down into several smaller loads for easier carrying. Rounds for these mortars weigh about 15 pounds each.”

“Finally, we have the Heavy mortars,” he concluded, “The 107-mm mortar, M30, and the 120-mm mortar, M120, are the current US heavy mortars. The M120 is replacing the M30, but both will remain in the US inventory for several years. The M30 is a rifled mortar, stabilizing its projectile by spinning it rapidly. The M120, like all other US mortars, fires fin-stabilized ammunition from a smooth bore. Although heavy mortars require trucks or tracked mortar carriers to move them, they are still much lighter than field artillery pieces. They outrange light and medium mortars, and their explosive power is much greater. The M30 weighs about 675 pounds. The M120 is much lighter at about 320 pounds. Rounds for the 107-mm mortar weigh about 28 pounds. Those for the 120-mm mortar weigh almost 33 pounds each.

“Since we’re a highly mobile force, I’d prefer that we only use a light mortar like the M224,” Gunny suggested. “The heavier version at 45 pounds is a hell of a lot more accurate but that increases the mortar crew from 2 to 3. A lot of the weight is in the bipod and heavy base plate. We can get those, but if we have to lug the things very far, we can leave them in our vehicles and use the tube and auxiliary base plate.”

“If we want to upgrade our defenses, we can get the medium mortars,” Gunny added. “I’ll probably have to get some of each to make up a carload.”

“They have any of the Barrett M82A1M rifles at Barstow, Gunny?” Jerry asked.

“Probably, Jerry, why?” Gunny asked.

“Get me one will you?” Jerry replied, “I’m going to end up shooting that SOB, so I might just as well start learning to shoot the Barrett M82A1M right now.”

“I’ll get you one but you won’t like it,” Gunny said.

“Why not?” Jerry asked, “Chuck likes it and shoots his a lot.”

“Ask Chuck what the most accurate rifles he has are. Go ahead, ask,” Gunny insisted.

“Chuck?” Jerry asked.

“My M-24 and White Feather are about the same, Jerry,” Chuck said, “About ½ MOA. The Barrett with Government issue .50BMG shoots about 3 MOA. With the Hornady A-MAX I can usually shoot ¾ MOA.”

“Oh,” Jerry said.

“Stop by my office tomorrow and I’ll give you a White Feather to try out, Jerry,” Gunny said. “And I’ll order a Barrett M82A1M.”

Gunny got on the phone the next day and ordered 8 M252 mortars, 24 M224 Mortars and an assortment of mortar rounds for each. He also ordered Jerry’s M82A1M. He knew just who he was going to give it to when Jerry gave it back to him. Susan had a birthday soon. He’d contact Barstow for the Barrett M82A1M. John told him the things he wanted would go out today and should be in Phoenix tomorrow afternoon.

Surprisingly, the skinheads were better organized than Metzger thought. On Valentine’s Day, they were organized and ready to begin intelligence operations on the two Phoenix groups. They were well outfitted, too, having amassed an impressive armory of AK-47’s and RPG’s. Two teams of 6 men each were sent to Phoenix; one to observe The Ranch and the other to observe Chandler. Since he was ahead of schedule, Metzger told them to take their time, avoid detection at all costs and establish the monthly pattern for both settlements. He wanted to see them back in California around April 15th.

al-Qaida – Chapter 22 – The End of WAR

Gunny and some others picked up the shipment the next day. He selected 72 persons to make up the 24 M224 mortar teams. He scheduled a training session for the following Monday. Revels had included some of the rechargeable short-range practice rounds for each weapon and enough of the full range practice rounds for the 81mm mortars to allow Gunny to register the weapons. The Sgt. Major was more familiar with mortars than Gunny and he agreed to determine the best placement for the weapons. With the bunkers beginning to fill, they were barely able to squeeze the mortar rounds into the explosives bunker. Jerry came by and picked up the White Feather and persuaded Susan to help him to adjust it for a proper fit.

Metzger had decided to use some of the remaining White Aryan Resistance people to do the intelligence work because the skinheads would not blend in. The teams would pose as Archeologists, digging for evidence of the disappearance of the Anasazi from their cliff dwellings. Since the residents were bound to notice them sooner or later, the Archeologists would introduce themselves to the residents of both communities to explain their presence in the area. It seemed to work; the residents were pleased to meet the Archeologists and offered to help. Thanks but no thanks, the Archeologists said. Metzger forgot 2 things. The best lie is based on the truth and it pays to know your enemy.

One evening while to Committee was sitting on the front porch, two of the residents, Ray and Joe came up to the group.

“Can we have a word with you?” Ray asked.

“What’s up Ray? Is there a problem in the fields?” Chuck asked.

“Not that I know of,” Ray answered.

“Is the rumor true that there is a group of Archeologists in the area looking for Anasazi artifacts?” Joe asked.

“Yes, they came in about a month ago and introduced themselves. Why?” Chuck asked.

“There’s something wrong with that story,” Ray suggested. “Joe and I are Zuni, one of the tribes of the Pueblo People. We came to Phoenix from the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico because the unemployment is so high. Anyway the Pueblo Tribes are the descendants of the Anasazi. Now either these Archeologists are dumb as rocks or they aren’t Archeologists.”

“Why do you say that?” Chuck asked his interest piqued.

“The Anasazi came out of the four corners region,” Joe explained. “Those guys are looking 100 miles too far west and 200 miles too far south.”

“Really?” Gunny replied, really interested.

“Maybe they’re looking for Apache artifacts, is that possible?” Ray asked.

“No, they were very specific about looking for Anasazi artifacts,” Chuck replied.

Ray couldn’t resist the urge, “White man speak with forked tongue,” he said.

“Thanks guys, we’ll look into it,” Chuck laughed.

Chuck gave Gunny one of those, “Oh, oh looks.”

Gunny smiled and said, “Right on time. Hey Jerry, how’s the practicing coming with the White Feather?”

“Remind me never, ever to ask a woman to teach me to shoot,” Jerry replied.

“Hey, I like that!” Susan replied. “He’s doing ok Gunny; when he listens.”

“Why do you ask?” Jerry inquired.

“It looks like you’re going to get your wish,” Gunny explained, “Those Archeologists are Metzger’s people. They have to be; and, they’re right on schedule. We’re going to have fireworks this 4th of July.”

“I’d start the deputy observers tomorrow Gunny,” Chuck replied. “But if your timetable was right, we should have a while.”

“I’m going to call John Revels,” Gunny said.

“Why? What didn’t you get?” Chuck asked.

“Artillery,” Gunny replied.

“Artillery?” Chuck groaned.

“Yeah, the Corps just replaced all of the M198, 155mm Towed Howitzers with the new M777 Lightweight 155mm howitzers,” Gunny explained. “John asked me if I wanted any. He has over 500 of the M198s to unload onto someone.”

“For crying out loud Gunny, first it was mortars, now you want Artillery?” Chuck responded exasperated.

“Just 3 or 4 Chuck,” Gunny half smiled, “Besides, they have a range of 30 klicks.”

“Maybe we should just move the settlement to Barstow,” Chuck said, “It would save the government money on freight.”

“Can we? Huh? Huh?” Gunny teased Chuck laughing.

The next day, Gunny called John Revels. Could he get 4 deuce and a half’s, loaded with 155mm projectiles and power charges plus 4 of the surplus M198s? Of course John told him, but he’d better send a couple of carloads of extra projectiles and power charges.

Gunny was turning out to be his best customer. Did Gunny need anything else, like some surplus Titan II missiles the Air Force had or anything? How about some Paladin self-propelled 155mm guns? Oops, sorry Gunny, the Paladins were all under Army control, what was he thinking? It would take a couple of weeks to fill the order; John would let him know when it was on the way.

Gunny hunted down Jim Roberts and they got to work on a 4th bunker to hold the artillery charges and projectiles. By this time, Roberts was convinced that Gunny was certifiable. They built the bunker large enough to hold 4 carloads of projectiles and charges. No doubt Gunny would think of something he had forgotten. Equipped as it was, all the residents of The Ranch would have had to done is raise a Unit Flag alongside the US and Arizona flags that flew every day. And circle the flagpoles with white, painted stones. Then, they’d be a full-fledged military installation.

Metzger’s people pulled out April 14th to make it to California by the 15th. The artillery arrived on the fifteenth. They noted construction of another bunker at The Ranch, but it was still empty when they left. When they arrived in California, Metzger wanted to know every last detail about the two facilities.

They spent the entire day of the 15th accounting for the activities they had observed. It appeared that the people at both facilities were well prepared. There was always someone at the ranges practicing. They’d seen some deliveries of munitions at The Ranch, but none at Chandler. They must be expecting more at The Ranch; they were building a new bunker. Yes, of course they bought the Anasazi, story; just to be sure we did some excavating. No, we didn’t find anything.

Metzger wanted to know if they’d seen any drills or anything that would indicate that either facility was prepared for an assault. Sorry, they said, didn’t see them drilling once in the two months. The only thing that Metzger could presume was that Bill Jackson had turned on him; that would explain why they were waiting for his men the last time they attacked.

Well, he’d go along this time and make sure that nobody screwed up. They would set up a practice at the Sonoran Desert National Monument. There was an area there that they could use to set up the general layouts of the two settlements. And, it was far enough from Phoenix that they shouldn’t be discovered. They’d move to Arizona around the first

of May.

On May Day, the young children of England followed the tradition of hundreds of years and danced around the Maypole. In Moscow, they didn't have a Military Parade because they didn't have an army left to parade. In the US, everyone had ignored May Day for 50 or more years. This May Day was different.

A steady caravan of vehicles arrived at the junction of I-10 and US 85 and turned south on US 85. They picked the vehicles up again at the junction of I-8 and US 85. The vehicles stopped about 2 miles east of the I-8 Junction. The Deputies watched for two days as the area slowly filled with more than 1,000 skinheads.

Chuck figured it was time to get Chandler in on the pending threat. Gunny, Jim Roberts, Chuck, Jose, Jerry and Terry drove down to Chandler and sat down with the folks to fill them in on what they believed was happening. The Chandler folks hadn't tripped to the ruse that Metzger's people had used.

They were completely shocked when they learned that a force numbering perhaps 1,000 was over at the Sonoran Desert National Monument, apparently practicing for an attack. When Gunny filled them in on the preparations he'd been making the past several months at The Ranch, they couldn't believe that he had acquired mortars and artillery. All they had were the 4 M-1117s and the extra Ma Deuces and Mark-19's.

"What we would like to do is make a preemptive attack on this bunch," Chuck said. "We can do that if you can provide security for your place and The Ranch while we're off taking a war to the WAR."

"Why don't you get the military involved?" the Chandler leader suggested.

"I can answer that one," Jerry said. "Chuck has always maintained that we couldn't do anything against Metzger and his bunch because they hadn't broken any laws. The military won't get involved until they do and by that time it will be too late."

"It doesn't sound to me like they've broken any laws this time either," one of the Chandlerites responded.

"No, they haven't," Chuck answered, "But I don't intend to give them the chance either. That's why I let Gunny run with getting the military ordinance."

"When are you going to hit them?" someone asked.

"Around the first of June," Chuck said, "They will be about half way through their training and may be getting careless. With the Arty, we can stand off 20,000 yards and blow the crap out of them. We'll put forces on I-8 west of their camp to cut off any retreat. That will be perfect for the M-1117s and some militia armed with LAWs or AT-4s."

“When do you want us in place?” the Chandler leader asked.

“Come up late on the evening of May 31st,” Chuck suggested, “We’ll have a dinner and then disperse our force.”

Gunny spent the next 4 weeks with Jim Roberts making sure that the 9 person teams could handle the M198’s. With the projectiles going at about 100 pounds each, there were some sore backs the first few days, to be sure. By the last full week of May, the crews could put the rounds exactly where there were intended to go.

Roberts suggested that they use air burst fuses, the better to take out large groups of people. The forward observers (Deputies) were maintaining a watch on the camp and they were clustered together in a rainbow of tents around what appeared to be a sort of field kitchen. Chuck decided that the best time to attack would be just before dawn, thereby catching the majority of the skinheads in the sack.

They would divide their forces in half. The M-1117s and half of the infantry people would take I-10 to 85 to I-8 and setup a roadblock. The M198s, their crews and the other half of the infantry would setup just south of I-8 on the eastern edge of the National Monument. The range would be 10 nautical miles, 20,000 yards. Gunny would be in charge of the M-1117s and Roberts in charge of the artillery. Chuck would be in charge of the eastern infantry, Jerry in charge of the western group.

Contrary to Gunny’s expectations, Jerry had stuck with the Barrett M82A1M. Once Susan was able to teach him to master the White Feather, he tackled the Barrett M82A1M. His skill level began to approach Chuck’s with the massive, long-range weapon. But, 1 MOA was 25” at 2,500 yards and he couldn’t shoot 1 MOA yet. His top range with any chance of getting a kill was a respectable 1,500 yards, however. And, he could kill anything within 1,000 yards with the White Feather. He decided to leave the Barrett M82A1M at The Ranch this trip.

They left around 8pm, everyone having eaten and answered the call of nature. Gunny led his vehicles on I-10 west to US 85 south to I-8 and then east to the 119 exit and set up east of the exit. Chuck led his group on I-10 south to I-8 west to the 140 exit. Roberts set up the artillery and dug out the laser range finder to establish the exact distance to the target. The camp was well lit; someone had tended the campfires all night long.

Just before the sun peeked over the horizon lending light to the new day, Roberts opened fire on the tent area. The M-198s were each capable of a sustained rate of fire of 2 rounds per minute. Roberts kept the fire up for a full thirty minutes, when he had exhausted his supply of projectiles and charges.

The people who had avoided immediate death from the artillery barrage climbed into vehicles and headed for the interstate. Some went east from the 124 on ramp, but most went west. Gunny opened up on the cars with the M-1117s. Any that he missed fell prey to the LAWs and the AT-4s wielded by the infantry troops.

The road was soon impassable with destroyed vehicles, the dead and the dying. Vehicles that brought up the rear turned in the median and fled to the east. Chuck had his infantry deployed at the 140 on ramp. As the vehicles neared the ramp, they were recipients of his troops' LAWs and AT-4s. Soon, the east bound side of the I-8 was blocked at the 140 ramp and cars that tried to cross the median and precede east bound on the west bound lane were destroyed in the median.

Robert's artillery troops moved through the destroyed vehicles, extinguishing the life of any living skinheads with their MP-5's. Chuck divided his force and they preceded west bound on both lanes of the I-8 to the 124 on ramp.

Although quite effective, the artillery had left a lot of living people. Their wounds ranged from moderate to severe. So far, they hadn't seen any sign of Tom Metzger and Jerry was becoming irritated. They moved through the camp, executing any skinheads who had survived the barrage.

"Hey Jerry," Terry called out, "Come over here."

Jerry went to see what Terry wanted. There hiding underneath a car was an older man who was clearly frightened out of his wits. Terry prodded him with his M1A and the man slowly slid out from underneath the car. Jerry couldn't believe his good luck, the man was Tom Metzger and it looked like he'd peed his pants. A moment or two later, it became apparent to Jerry that Metzger had done more than pee his pants.

"I thought we told you not to come back?" Jerry said, his face just inches in front of Metzger's.

"You SOB's killed 450 of my people," Metzger responded defiantly.

"More like 1,500 now," Jerry responded. "Hey Gunny, you want the pleasure?"

"Wouldn't dirty my hands," Gunny spat. "Use the SOB for target practice, that's what you've always wanted to do."

"Naw, this piece of crap isn't worth the price of a bullet," Jerry replied. "I seen something in a movie once, maybe I'll try that."

"What would that be?" Chuck asked joining the group.

"Anyone have a piece of rawhide?" Jerry asked. Bad luck, no one did.

"Plan B," Jerry said and dragged Metzger over to an open spot. They staked Metzger out, spread eagled in the early morning sun.

"Well, let's gather up their weapons and ammunition and get out of here," Jerry sug-

gested.

“What are you going to do with him?” Terry asked nodding to Metzger.

“Nothing,” Jerry answered and began to gather weapons and ammo from the dead.

It took them the better part of the morning to gather anything worth salvaging from the skinheads. At first, Metzger was silent. Then he began cussing them. Finally he pleaded with them to end it. The sun was particularly warm that day and the men and women made no effort to spare Metzger observing them drinking from their canteens and water bottles. When they left, Metzger could no longer speak, so parched was his mouth.

Jerry drove back to the National Monument the next day to put Metzger out of his misery. When he got there, Tom Metzger was dead and an animal, probably a coyote, had eaten part of the body. Jerry sure hoped that Metzger had been alive when the animal had started to eat.

The ranchers thanked the Chandlerites for guarding The Ranch while they were off hunting. They offered them their pick of the piles of weapons. The Chandlerites took the RPGs and rockets, and some of the better rifles and handguns. They took a couple of pickup loads of the better remaining weapons to the group up at Farnsworth. The remainder was stacked in an empty area of the garage. Gunny would have something to do for the summer, salvaging as many of the weapons as he could to use as trade goods. As well armed as America had become, there wasn't much of a market for used AKs.

John Revels called Gunny one day asking how the arty had worked out. Fine Gunny told him, they'd used up 4 truckloads of shells practicing and 4 truckloads of shells on an exercise. No sweat John told him, a carload of projectiles and charges would go out in a few hours; they were already loaded and the shipment had been cancelled. Could John put another M82A1M on the load, Gunny asked, he'd planned to issue the Barrett to someone but the first person that used it liked it and he still needed one for the other person; again, no sweat. Anything else, John wanted to know. Well, they'd used up some LAWs and AT-4s on the exercise was there any room on the car for replacements? A little John said so Gunny told him to fill the space with LAWs.

“Dammit Gunny,” John finally said, “I've got to get rid of these M198s. I was fishing hoping you'd ask for some more. Please!”

“How many you have to unload?” Gunny asked.

“Eight. And before you asked, they come with a deuce and a half full of ammo,” John said.

“Tell you what John, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours,” Gunny offered. “Toss in 4 carloads of extra projectiles and charges and I'll take them. The people down at Chan-

bler don't have any arty at all."

"The trainload will be there tomorrow Gunny, thanks a million," John said.

"Who was on the phone?" Chuck asked walking in on the tail end of the conversation.

"John Revels. He called me," Gunny laughed, "Has his butt in a sling because he still has 8 of the M198s left."

"You didn't get more of them did you?" Chuck asked.

"Hell yeah," Gunny laughed, this time at Chuck's reaction, "But only two for us. I figured the folks down at Chandler ought to have their own arty. That way, they won't come asking us to cover their butt."

"Good thinking Gunny," Chuck smiled, "You didn't think to get Susan a Barrett, did you? She was awful disappointed when Jerry decided to keep the other one."

"It's on the train," Gunny said, "Along with a crappot full of M72s to replace what we used up on the WAR bunch."

al-Qaida – Chapter 23 – Ft. Defiance

It took Gunny most of the summer to rebuild the captured AK's. Before he started that project, he and some others serviced all of the handguns. They were emptied, cleaned and oiled. The nicer pieces were added to their growing arsenal, the remainder assigned to trade good status. They then serviced the AK's and added them to the trade goods. At the Labor Day picnic, he announced that the project was done.

"I shoulda stayed in the Corps," Gunny complained. "We've had more action since the Eurasian invasion than they have."

Yeah," Terry agreed, "We oughta rename this place Fort Defiance."

What started as a joke at the Labor Day celebration soon became a reality. The tiny community, which had started with 4 people, Chuck, Jose, Maria and Teresa, had continued to grow and calling it The Ranch didn't reflect its status as a community.

All of the mobile homes were filled and they were scouting the greater Phoenix area looking for more homes. All of the new homes were gone and they were going through abandoned mobile home parks selecting the newer homes to move to Ft. Defiance. With the virtual cessation of the annual flight of the snowbirds, there was no shortage of homes to choose from.

The trencher was brought out and the utility lines extended. The capacity of the septic field was tripled. A street was put in separating the original tract of 196 homes and the new tract of 196 homes. They scavenged additional streetlights for the new tract and built a paved street to the community entrance on the road.

Jim Roberts and his wife joined the Committee of Ten and they renamed the group the Ft. Defiance Council. To the south, Chandler was experiencing similar growth. And the few snowbirds that actually made it to the Phoenix area mostly moved into Farnsworth.

Gunny was only too happy to unload the surplus AKs unto Farnsworth to arm their new residents. The tiny little ranch, originally 40 acres of chaparral, had grown to over 5,000 acres, and President Kyl had arranged for the BLM to deed the property to the community.

In Washington, DC, the Populists ruled. But, as had been the case with the Democrat and Republican parties, it soon became politics as usual. Most of the Senators and Representatives wanted pork barrel projects for their constituents. Since the Presidency was limited to a single term, Kyl didn't have to answer to any special groups to ensure support for reelection and he viewed each bill with skepticism, evaluating whether or not the bill was in the best interest of the American citizens.

The real power in the administration was the Vice President who was also the President of the Senate. He wanted to be President and despite any protestations to the contrary,

Arnold Schwarzenegger was all politician. The Populists eventually divided into two groups, the moderates and the conservatives. A quasi-two party system had reemerged.

The new Congress, elected in the fall of 2006, had more than enough votes to repeal NAFTA. Despite Kyl's veto, the Congress overrode the veto. NAFTA was for all practical purposes dead anyway with the rise of Mexico as a major economic power in the western hemisphere. But, the unilateral action of the American Congress angered the President of Mexico.

Facing an economic down turn because the US imports of Mexican goods had slowed to a trickle the man began to posture, even to the point of threatening war against its NATO ally. The Canadians didn't want any part of the affair and remained totally neutral. Great Britain offered to increase its imports from Mexico in a last ditch effort to calm the Mexican President. Great Britain already imported 90% of the Mexican oil production and they feared that a war between their two allies would interrupt their supply of oil.

At Ft. Defiance, the residents became alarmed at the continuing reports of talk of war flowing from ABC News. As the community continued to grow, the per capita ratio of motor vehicles dwindled and despite now having a regular militia of over 500 people, they had been forced to resort to the ancient horse cavalry to move their forces. They could only move 200 of the troops by motor vehicle, the other 300 had to ride horses.

Faced with a rapidly increasing population due to the return of its citizens from the US, Mexico began to increase its armed forces. Though the number of jobs steadily increased the returning people seriously raised the population of Mexico. Since the government now had plenty of money, they raised the military pay and began attracting men in droves.

To equip the new Army, Mexico turned to Germany. German manufacturers went into high gear building weapons for Mexico. When Mexico began to buy the Leopard 2A6 Tanks, the Germans ran 3 shifts at the factories. Unfortunately, the Leopard 2A6 was, in nearly every way, equal to the M1A2 Abrams. The Leopard even used American ammunition. President Kyl lobbied the Germans not to supply the armor to the Mexican Government, but his pleas fell on deaf ears.

Eventually, the Mexican Army outnumbered the US Army and they had as much armor as the US. The primary supplier of arms was H&K, and most of the soldiers were equipped with the several variations of the G36 5.56x45mm (.223) rifle. Rather than selecting the MP5 submachine guns, the Mexican Army chose the HK53EA3, allowing them to standardize on a single caliber of ammunition for their rifles and submachine guns. Preferring a heavy caliber handgun, the Mexican Army chose the HK Mark 23 .45 Auto.

Arnold was in the Oval Office and Kyl was confronting him over the override of his veto.

"I would have thought that you, of all people, would have done more to influence the Senators to uphold my veto Arnold," Kyl said shaking his head.

"Well, they were going to override anyway Mr. President," Swartzenegger replied, "Besides, what difference does it make? NAFTA was dead."

Look at these," Kyl said handing Arnold a stack of pictures. "That's the Mexican Army. They're doing so-called training maneuvers just 20 miles south of our border. The President of Mexico is using the repeal of NAFTA as an excuse. I think they are getting ready to invade the US. That's what difference it makes."

"I didn't realize..." Arnold started to say.

"Well, at least you didn't say you were only following orders," Kyl responded. "I'm going to announce training exercises along our southern border. No doubt the Mexican government will have something to say about that. I expect you to get a lid on those moderates in the Senate. And, arrange for an emergency appropriations bill to pay for the exercise. The equipment that Mexico has acquired in the recent past makes going to war with them an iffy proposition at best. You need to be seen as supporting this administration if you have any hopes of getting elected to this office in 2008."

"I will take care of it immediately Mr. President," Arnold said, relieved.

President Kyl immediately issued orders for all US military forces to move to 20 miles north of the Mexican border. They were to stage mock exercises, but this was not a drill. Mexico was expected to invade very soon now. Kyl ordered the Predator UMW's airborne with a downlink to his on scene commander. The state militias were ordered federalized and messages were sent out to the local militias via the Internet.

Mexico had seen what the US had done to the Muslims and then Eurasia and the Mexican President was determined not to make the mistakes of either group. He acquired a vast quantity of the PzH, Germany's next generation 155-millimeter self-propelled howitzer.

The German howitzer had a higher rate of fire than its American counterpart and could be re-supplied in 11 minutes. It used the same ammunition as the American artillery. It also required far fewer men to operate than all but the most modern American artillery.

If Mexico had a deficiency, it lay in its Air Force. Unable to afford the price tag of the EF-2000 Eurofighter, Mexico had purchased instead Tornado F3 air defense fighters and Tornado GR1 strike/attack aircraft. In the hands of the skilled German and English pilots, the Tornado was nothing to sneeze at, but the Mexican Air Force had neither the American Red Flag nor Top Gun training programs. They were competent enough with the GR1 strike/attack aircraft but their air defense fighter pilots couldn't match the skills of the F-15C, F-16 and F/A-18 pilots of the US Air Force and Navy.

Kyl put 8 Nimitz class carriers to sea and moved the US Air Force to Air Force bases within striking distance of the US southern border. The A-10 Warthogs, scheduled for retirement, had been upgraded and the fleet doubled. America had abandoned all aircraft planned after the F-22 Raptors, relying instead on proven technology.

The residents of Ft. Defiance and Chandler had made contingency plans in case the American military ran into trouble. Their combined militia had grown to nearly 1,800 men and women. John Revels had shipped two railcars of the Copperhead artillery projectiles for their 155mm howitzers. Ft. Defiance had 8 of the howitzers, Chandler 6.

It wasn't the largest artillery unit around, but they could fire 2 rounds per minute per gun sustained with conventional shells and 1 round per minute per gun sustained with the Copperhead projectiles. The cannon-launched guided projectile (CLGP) M712 (Copperhead) is a 155-mm, separate-loading, laser-guided, HE projectile. It is heavier (137.6 pounds) and longer (54 inches) than the standard 155-mm projectile.

The M712 projectile consists of three main sections: a guidance section (forward), warhead section (center), and control section (rear). The guidance section contains the seeker head assembly and the electronics assembly. The nose of the projectile houses a laser seeker in a plastic cone. The warhead section contains an HE antitank warhead consisting of 14.75 pounds of composition B. The control section includes the fins and wings that deploy in flight and allow the round limited maneuverability.

The trajectory of the Copperhead projectile is similar to that of a conventional round. Only when the projectile reaches a point on the descending branch of the trajectory does it differ. At that point, on the basis of the two-digit timer setting included in the fire commands, the guidance and control systems are activated. This enables the projectile to alter the remainder of its trajectory.

At 20 seconds from impact, the laser designator operator begins designating the target. The ground laser operator may use a G/VLLD, a laser target designator (LTD), or modular universal laser equipment (MULE). Airborne systems include the AH-64, OH-58D, and unmanned aerial vehicles. The Copperhead projectile acquires the reflected laser energy and initiates internal guidance and control, allowing it to maneuver to the target. (Obsolete and replaced with the Excalibur using GPS guidance.)

Between the artillery and the mortars, the combined local militia could put up one hell of a fight for a short period of time. With the Copperhead projectiles, they could wreak havoc on enemy armor forces. The contingency plan called for them to deploy in the Ironwood Forest National Monument directly west of Tucson, if the federal forces ran into serious trouble. They pressed several semis into service to haul their munitions.

The stage was set for a major US-Mexican conflict. Arnold pushed the emergency funding through the Senate and applied virtual heretofore-unknown pressure on the moderate Populists in the house. Within a month of the meeting between Kyl and

Swartzenegger in the Oval Office, 95% of the American forces were dispersed along the US border with Mexico conducting 'training exercises'.

The die was cast and the Mexican Army and Air Forces began to probe the American defenses. The Abrams and Leopard tanks held back and the initial phase of the war began as an artillery duel. The forces were fairly evenly matched and the American MLRS units offset the Mexican advantage in the range of their artillery. The strike aircraft eventually decimated enough of the artillery units that the engagement moved from the artillery duel to a tank duel. The Leopard 2A6 tanks were the equal of the American units in everything but the Americans advanced Command and Control system. Nevertheless, the American armor units were forced to withdraw.

The US tried to repeat the tactics used successfully against Eurasia in WW III, but the Mexicans had studied that war and wouldn't fall for the bait. All tank advances were coupled with large movements of strike/attack aircraft with an F3 CAP. While the Americans regrouped and re-supplied, a mixed unit of Mexican Armor and Infantry probed into Arizona and came within range of the combined local militia's Ironwood fortification.

No one knew that the Ft. Defiance and Chandler troops were there. Those 14 howitzers, firing from heavily camouflaged positions rained death on the combined armor and infantry group, forcing it to withdraw. The US military got the break it needed in southern Arizona and they advanced against the retreating Mexican forces, destroying them. Meanwhile American carrier aircraft struck the rear of the Mexican Army destroying their supply lines and reserve forces.

The resulting confusion allowed the US Air Force and Naval Aviation to initiate a massive bombing campaign. The air campaign had only lasted for ten days before reduced fuel supplies and munitions force it to a halt. However, it allowed the Army and Marines to complete their resupply and they launched an even bigger offensive against the Mexican Army. This campaign resulted in a stalemate but not before the Mexican forces experienced significant damage. After a month of heavy fighting, the American and Mexicans were again in a standoff, exactly where they were when the attacks began.

The American air forces were able to hamper the Mexican re-supply efforts; it wasn't a shortage of aircraft that prevented the type of wholesale slaughter they had done against the Eurasians, rather a shortage of CBU's and jet fuel. Finally the US mounted a major B-52 strike on Mexico City and reduced the city to the same pile of rubble that earthquake had done years earlier. With their Command and Control structure in ruins and an inability to re-supply their units, the Mexican Generals began to consider suing for peace.

Meanwhile, the US was moving vast quantities of fuel and munitions to the front line American forces. After a month-long standoff, the US was ready to invade Mexico. Gunny was out of munitions for his artillery. He too was able to resupply and was chomping at the bit to move to the Mexican border. Chuck restrained him, pointing out that they were the last line of defense and that they hadn't any experience working as a

combined force with the US military.

The Americans began their assault much the same as they had with Operation Desert Storm 15 years earlier. They began an all out air attack using B-52's, F-15E Strike Eagles and F/A-18's. Under the cover of the air attacks, they moved their artillery right up to the border and began to rain down barrages of airbursts on the Mexican infantry. Apache helicopters and A-10 Warthogs began attacking the Leopard tanks in earnest. It was over in a matter of days, and the remaining Mexican troops surrendered.

"Dammit Chuck," Gunny shouted exasperated, "I wanted to go to Mexico, but no, you wanted to play it safe. Now the war is over and I missed out!"

"Didn't taking out 131 Leopard tanks and 2 Regiments of Infantry satisfy your blood lust?" Chuck asked.

"Is that what you think this was all about?" Gunny asked taken aback by Chuck's question. "They were on American soil, Chuck."

"I know, Gunny. I didn't mean it the way it sounded," Chuck replied. "How did you make out salvaging from the group we attacked?"

"Some of those Leopards only had broken tracks," Gunny grinned, "Must have been near misses. We were able to salvage 24 of them and several reloads for each tank."

How about the small arms?" Chuck pressed his inquiry.

"I'd say we have enough G-36s, magazines and .223 ammo to last us the rest of our lives and our children's lives," Gunny beamed. "I suppose that we'd better start moving our equipment back to Chandler and Ft. Defiance. We're going to have to build another bunker to hold the 120mm ammo for the tanks."

The Chandlerites didn't want any part of the German built tanks and Gunny ended up with all 24 of them. They took 500 of the G-36s to arm future residents, leaving Gunny with a few thousand to deal with. It took the better part of a week to haul their equipment and spoils back to Ft. Defiance.

When they were done, Gunny assembled a crew to clean and store the G-36s, HK53EA3s and HK Mark 23s. They stored the extra .223 and .45 auto ammo in an empty bunker, which had previously held 155mm projectiles and charges. His chores completed, Gunny found some nice round rocks, painted them white and laid a circle of the painted stones around the flagpoles.

The President of Mexico had been killed in the B-52 bombing of the Mexican capital. In subsequent elections, the citizens of Mexico elected a more moderate leader and Mexico began to rebuild. Their oil exports allowed them to recover fairly rapidly and their in-

dustry was intact. The loss of so many soldiers essentially solved their population problems and the Army released vast numbers of troops to aid in the rebuilding effort.

Germany had benefited tremendously from the Mexican-American war of 2006-2007. Their sales of arms had revitalized the country. They modernized their fledgling military, slowly recovering from the losses of WW III. The French, having lost the markets for their major exports, were struggling, but making little headway in their recovery efforts.

In Washington, DC, Arnold recovered nicely from his faux pas and if ABC News were to be believed, he stood a good chance of succeeding President Kyl in the election of 2008. Meanwhile, back in Phoenix, the residents of Ft. Defiance, Chandler and Farnsworth settled back into their daily routines.

The Council was gathered on Chuck and Susan's front porch after the picnic that Ft. Defiance held to celebrate the completion of the planting of their crops in the spring of 2007.

"This has been an interesting 10 years," Gunny said. "Ten years ago, we had troops scattered all over the world trying to export democracy. We've fought 3 wars now on American soil and I do believe we've seen the last of war and lawlessness for a while."

"God, I hope so," Chuck replied. "It wouldn't bother me one bit if we never had to fight another battle. You've noticed that since the disappearance of Tom Metzger, the racist groups have toned down the rhetoric haven't you? The only problem we face as a country is the resurgence of liberalism."

"Never happen," Roberts offered, "The big cities will take at least another 30 years to fully recover from those nukes. A lot of that liberalism happened as a result of WW II and the Great Depression. The country is more in tune with its roots."

"This war drained the country pretty badly," Susan added. "A lot of lives were lost on both sides. I expect the Populists to reenact the graduated income tax to balance the budget and pay off the war debt."

"More likely they'll raise the flat tax rate 1 or 2 percent on a temporary basis, dear," Chuck suggested.

Similar conversations were occurring across America. After years of being the world's policeman, the United States was semi-isolated and out of the policing business. The population of the world would take at least two generations to recover from the wars. Peace had finally come in our time, but the cost had been tremendous.

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